PERCEPTION OF YOUTHS OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP TRAINING ON THE WILLINGNESS AND STRATEGIES TO START-UP BUSINESS VENTURE

By
Joshua Sule Mamman PhD
joshua.mamman@kwasu.edu.ng
Department of Business and Entrepreneurship Education,
Kwara State University, Malete
P.M.B 1530, Ilorin
Kwara State, Nigeria
https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3872-2247

Abstract

Entrepreneurship is viewed as an effective tool not only for curbing unemployment, impoverishment, and under-development in developing nations, but also as a means for speedy economic growth in both developed and developing nations. This study examined the perception of youths of the effectiveness of Entrepreneurship Training on the willingness and strategies to start-up a business venture. Two purposes and research questions were raised for the study. The study used qualitative research methods in addressing the research questions. The population of the study comprises youths across the districts in Bokkos Local Government Area of Plateau State. A total sample of 245 youths was selected from the population of the study. The sample was selected using a stratified random sampling technique. The identified stratum was the districts in Bokkos Local Government Area of Plateau State. The participants were trained for one month, thereafter, focus group discussion was conducted with the youths after the training to gather the data for the study. The focus group discussion guide was designed by the researchers and is made up of nine open-ended questions. The qualitative data gathered were transcribed and analyzed using content analysis to determine the relevant themes. The study found that youths have a positive perception of the effectiveness of entrepreneurship training on willingness and strategies to start-up entrepreneurship business. Based on the findings, the study concludes that entrepreneurship training is effective in helping youths to have the willingness and learn the strategies to start-up a business venture. Based on the findings, it was recommended among others that non-governmental organizations, philanthropists, and well-meaning individuals should organize entrepreneurship training for youths to help create entrepreneurship willingness in them. This will lead to poverty reduction when the willingness is translated into practice. Keywords: entrepreneurship, training, willingness, strategies, business, venture Introduction Entrepreneurship is a phenomenon of utmost importance that is capable of revolutionizing the economy of any nation.

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Introduction

Entrepreneurship is the ability some people hold to live with the risks and combine elements of production to create commodities and services. It can as well be viewed as the willingness and power of an individual to look for investment opportunities in the environment and be able to install and operate an enterprise successfully based on the identified opportunities. It is also conceptualized to mean the operation and activities undertaking by entrepreneurs directed at capturing value associated with business opportunities. Entrepreneurship development has led to employment generation, growth of the economy, and sustainable development in many countries. Entrepreneurship is viewed as an effective tool not only for

curbing unemployment, impoverishment, and under-development in developing nations, but also as a means for speedy economic growth in both developed and developing nations (Evans, 2011; Fatoki & Garwe, 2010).

Entrepreneurship development is the key to poverty reduction, creation of employment, and speedy economic growth, several governments in Nigeria have, over the past years, made policies and programmes, targeted at developing entrepreneurship through the growth of small-scale businesses. Despite all the efforts, the unemployment rate has remained high, rising from 13.1% in the year 2000 to 23.9% in 2011, with youth unemployment put at over 50% (Risenetworks, 2013). Over 100 million Nigerians live below the poverty line on less than US$1 a day and with the percentage of the population in abject poverty rising from 54.7% to 60.9% between 2004 and 2010 (Fairoz, Hirobumi & Tanaka, 2010). Entrepreneurship has been seen differently by authors.

The entrepreneurship concept has many definitions and the common denominator in a good number of studies is the important role of factors namely, risk-taking, innovation, competition, proactive, flexibility and perseverance identification, and use of opportunities, with varying degrees of emphasis (Zahra, et. al, 2008). Rauch, Wiklund, Lumpkin, and Frese (2009) similarly expressed the strong view that the existence, nature, and discovery of opportunities constitute the real core of entrepreneurship. They provide an explanation of why some people discover these opportunities while others do not. In the view of Aladekomo (2004) entrepreneurship is made up of a combination of three elements: the context in which the opportunity arises or is created, a set of personal competencies necessary to identify and use the opportunity, and the capacity to actualize the opportunity by transforming it into a business. If carefully planned, entrepreneurs can be trained.

Entrepreneurial skills training may, however, be a new concept in Nigeria, other countries are shifting emphasis to entrepreneurial awareness and training. It is high time schools to recognize the need for intensive training in entrepreneurship. Ladzani and Van Vuuren (2002) indicated that rapidly changing circumstances require entrepreneurship training at various stages of the organization. Private and public organizations as well as SMEs should receive regular training. They further noted that training can provide owner/managers with the knowledge of how to approach certain challenges, thereby saving time and financial resources, and to become aware of some pertinent regulations and ways that could help them do the work with less stress. Important areas of training might include willingness, motivational, business, and entrepreneurial skills training. Despite this broad range of possibilities, many training institutions conduct training in only one area. Institutions that primarily concentrate on business skills or motivational skills and offer very little on entrepreneurial skills and willingness do not help the SME sector they serve. Training for SME owners/handlers should be seen to be in three tiers that worked together (Cohen, 2006).

Van Vuuren (1999) developed a model amenable to empirical testing that attempts to address the question "How do you improve the entrepreneurial performance of an individual through training intervention?" The model postulates that entrepreneurial performance is a multiplicative function of motivation times entrepreneurial skills and business skills. Entrepreneurial performance is based on the starting of a business/utilizing an opportunity and growth of the business idea. Motivation is seen as the entrepreneur's level of need for achievement. This begins with the willingness to enter into an entrepreneurship venture. Entrepreneurial skills include creativity, innovation, risk-taking, and the ability to interpret successful entrepreneurial role models and identification of opportunities. Business skills include being able to formulate business plans, and financial, marketing, operational, human resources, legal, communication, and management skills. These altogether can be summed up to be the strategies for entering and running a business venture. This study is hinged on the

entrepreneurial disposition theory of entrepreneurship development which was propounded by T.V.S. Rao. His assumption is that courageous entrepreneurial disposition is very important for entrepreneurial development. Besides, for entrepreneurial establishments, individual, physical, and orienting factors are also essential. According to Rao, Entrepreneurial disposition includes factors like dynamic motivation, long-term devotion, individual, social and physical sources, and political system. These factors influence the entrepreneurial establishment, development, and also promote industrial activities. This theory covers the area of willingness to start a venture.

Willingness to engage in entrepreneurship is an essential feature to become a successful entrepreneur, without entrepreneurial and actions one cannot be an entrepreneur. One of the substantive elements in the hierarchical structure of elements that makes one to become a successful entrepreneur is the willingness to embark on entrepreneurial action. You will constantly require to consider action as an entrepreneur. Probably it will be daily. Thus, your chore as an entrepreneur will require from you many entrepreneurial activities and actions that will require to be performed regularly (Fatoki & Garwe, 2010).

There are many times in life that the willingness for achievement motive can be implemented within the individual. Just like the willingness to be independent financially through entrepreneurship. This willingness can be achieved by techniques such as: Setting up the network, or discovering what associations exist in the achievement area, and then extending, strengthening, or otherwise improving the net that they form; conceptualizing the network, or forming a clear and conscious verbal construct that labels the network; tying the network to as many cues as possible in everyday life, especially those preceding the following actions, to ensure that the network will be regular once formed;working out the relationship of the network to subordinate associative clusters, such as the self-concept so that these dominant schemata do not block the achievement thoughts (Van Vuuren, 1996). It is pertinent that all entrepreneurship training programs specifically include the development of the intention of the potential entrepreneur. This will help the possibility to sustain this behavioural change over time and to vest its permanency. The approach to the explanation entrepreneurial intentions has a long history in entrepreneurship studies, which can be traced back to the work of McClelland's in the 1950s. Yurtkorua, Acar, and Teraman (2014) stated that the tendencies to be self-employed is higher for those with positive attitudes to taking risk and independence. Thus, the higher a person's tolerance for risk-taking and the higher their willingness for making decision independently, the stronger their intention and readiness to be self-employed (Douglas & Shepherd, 2002). With the willingness and proper strategies, starting entrepreneurship becomes possible.

It is easy to be captivated by the promise of entrepreneurship and the lure of becoming one's boss. It can be difficult, however, for a prospective entrepreneur to determine what product or service to provide (USINFO, n.d). Many elements need to be put into consideration, including an estimate of market potential, competitor, financial resources, and one's abilities and interests. Then, it becomes paramount to ask: Why would a consumer prefer to make purchases from a new firm? One significant element is the uniqueness of one’s idea. By making a new business outstanding from its rivals, uniqueness may pave way for the entry of a new commodity or service into the market. It is better to avoid an entry method that is based on low price alone. New businesses are usually small. Large firms always possess the merit of lowering costs by producing in large quantities. Successful entrepreneurs often distinguish their ventures through differentiation, niche specification, and innovation (USINFO, n.d). Distinction is an effort to break up the new company’s product or service from that of its rivals. When distinction is successful, the new product or service is comparatively less sensitive to price fluctuations because customers value the quality that earns the product its distinction.A product may be

functionally similar to its rivals' product, but have characteristics that improve its usefulness. Niche specification is an effort to offer a commodity or service that meets the needs of a specific subset of consumers. By concentrating on a pretty narrow market, a new business may satisfy customer demands better than larger rivals can. Changes in population attributes may create opportunities to serve niche markets (United Nations Development Programme, Commission on the Private Sector and Development, 2004).

USINFO (n.d) stated that innovation is perhaps the defining feature of entrepreneurship. Visionary business expert Peter F. Drucker explained innovation as "change that creates a new dimension of performance." There are two main types of product innovation. Pioneering innovation brings about a technological discovery or new-to-the-world product. Incremental innovation is simply making changes on the already existing products. Innovation can be made in all aspects of businesses, from the production processes to price fixation level. Entrepreneurs in less-developed nations often make their innovations by way of making changes and adapting products made in advanced countries. Drucker referred to this process as creative imitation. This imitation takes place whenever the imitators understand how changes can be made, used, or sold in their market better than the real makers of the product do. Innovation, distinction, and/or market specification are effective strategies to assist a new business to woo customers and start making revenue (United Nations Development Programme, Commission on the Private Sector and Development, 2004). When potential entrepreneurs have these strategies, it becomes easier for them to start-up business ventures. The results of this study will enable youths to understand and focus on implementing key business practices and adopting the key entrepreneurial strategies and skills that can lead their businesses to long-term survival. Achieving this will contribute to the reduction of the high small-scale business failure rates and consequently reducing poverty among the youths. The findings of this study will help the future entrepreneur to be aware of the characteristics that will enable them to beat the odds and go after their dreams with focus.

Statement of the problem

The poverty level among youths has become a worrisome situation. Poverty has various expressions, including lack of income and factors of production capable of ensuring sustainable living; malnutrition, lack of access to quality education and other basic amenities, poor housing; social inequalities, and exclusion. Most of these poverty indications can be seen among the youths in Nigeria. This is because many Nigerian youths are unemployed. Youth unemployment is an issue in Nigeria, the youths are also discouraged in seeking jobs. This situation is worsened by the fact that the government cannot create jobs nor absorb job seekers at a rate that will meaningfully contribute to the alleviation of the issues of unemployment. Based on this statement, it looks like there are few or no job opportunities for the unemployed and graduates of tertiary institutions.In a bid to address the issue, the government of Nigeria has tried to promote entrepreneurship as a means of addressing the issue of youth unemployment. The question is, has these efforts by the government changed the mindset of the youths from seeking jobs? Youth mindsets can be changed by giving them orientation on the willingness and strategies to start-up business venture through entrepreneurship training, hence the need for this study.

Research Questions

1. What is the perception of youths of the effectiveness of entrepreneurship training on their willingness to start up a business venture?
2. What is the perception of youths of the effectiveness of entrepreneurship training on the strategies to avoid business failure among youths?

Methodology

The study adopted qualitative research. The study used qualitative research methods in addressing the research questions. The methodology involved the examination of the perceptions of youths of the effectiveness of entrepreneurship training on their willingness to start a business. A qualitative design was appropriate for this study because, as Williams (2008) has noted, that few truths constitute universal knowledge; rather, there are multiple perspectives about the world.The population of the study comprises youths across the districts in Bokkos Local Government Area of Plateau State. A total sample of 245 youths was selected from the population of the study. The sample was selected using a stratified random sampling technique. The identified stratum was the districts in Bokkos Local Government Area of Plateau State.The participants were trained for one month, thereafter,focus group discussion was conducted with the youths after the training.

The focus group discussion guide was designed by the researchers and is made up of nine open-ended questions. The questions were meant to solicit the perception of the participants of the effectiveness of the training received on their willingness to start-up a business, and strategies to avoid business failure for poverty reduction. The focus group discussion was conducted face-to-face during the final session of the training. English and Hausa languages were the media of communication for the discussion because some of the participants were fluent in the English language. Ethical considerations such as informed consent, voluntary participation, and confidentiality were considered. The data from the focus group discussion was audiotaped on the permission of the participants. The discussion took lasted for two hours.

To ensure both face and content validity of the instruments, the focus group discussion guide was validated by three experts. This was to ensure that the focus group discussion questions measure accurately and consistently what they were supposed to measure. The training was for three hours each, thrice a week. The training lasted for a month. Immediately after the training, the focus group discussion was conducted with the participants to ascertain the impact the entrepreneurship training has made on the perception of the participants regarding the willingness to start-up a business and strategies to avoid business failure for poverty reduction.The qualitative data gathered were transcribed and analyzed using content analysis to determine the relevant themes.

Results

Out of the 243 youths that began this study, 241 participated in the training to the end of the training. The analysis of the data collected are presented under relevant headings as follows:
Research Question One: What is the perception of youths of the effectiveness of entrepreneurship training on their willingness to start up a business venture?

Entrepreneurship training on willingness to start an entrepreneurial venture

On training experiences and willingness to start an entrepreneurial venture to reduce poverty, almost all participants indicated that they are willing to start an entrepreneurial venture. The data collected for research question one was analyzed and the following themes were identified:

Theme 1: Entrepreneurial willingness

On training experiences and willingness to start up a business, all the participants expressed their enthusiasm and great willingness to start up a business as soon as possible. Almost all of them said *they are willing to apply the knowledge and skills we have learned in*

entrepreneurship training to practice. One hundred and eighty-two participants representing 92.9% affirmed that *this training was a great eye-opener for them and they are willing to change the course of their financial status, by engaging in entrepreneurship*. They said that after all there is no job available for them outside there. Also, 167 participants representing 69.3% said that *they are willing to start up their businesses because they want to be their bosses instead of working under others.* They stated that they want to be employers of labour. Some of the participants claimed that they are tired of seeking jobs that are nowhere to be seen and therefore the training was a very timely opportunity for them. Some participants spoke about their experiences about their perception of their job career. Furthermore, most of them expressed their satisfaction with how the training content met their needs of what they want to do in life.

Theme 2: Willingness to engage in entrepreneurial venture even when employed

Some of the participants said that they are willing to start a business venture even when they are employed. One hundred and thirty-four participants representing 55.6% said that *they are willing to have a business of their own even if they are employed elsewhere because there is no job security when working for others.* The participants want to combine both employed job and their business in case they lose the employed job. A few participants 67(27.8%) said *they are willing to start a business of their own together with government or private employment because they want more than one stream of income.* These participants have seen that an entrepreneurial venture is a necessity even one is employed. The participants stated that the training has exposed them to see the need to start a business venture of their own. Most of the participants said that their orientation about entrepreneurship has changed for the better. Ninety-eight participants representing 40.7% acknowledged that the entrepreneurship training has made them want to start a business venture of their own. The training has created awareness on the participants which has gone a long way to making them have a positive intention about having their own business, rather than struggling to look for jobs.

Theme 3: Willing to start a business for financial independence

A few participants 78(32.4%) said *they are willing to start a business of their own to achieve financial independence.* These groups of participants are of the perception that the entrepreneurship training given to them has motivated them to start their own business which will help them to achieve financial independence. One hundred and twenty-nine participants representing 53.5% said *they are willing to start a business venture to accommodate the desired lifestyle.* These participants acknowledged that entrepreneurship training has helped them to see the need to be willing to own their business.

Research Question Two: What is the perception of youths of the effectiveness of entrepreneurship training on the strategies to avoid business failure among youths?

On training experiences and strategies to start-up a business, this is one of the areas that the participants were trained, that is, one of the contents of the training programme. The participants said that they have learned a lot of strategies to start-up a business in the course of the training programme.

Theme 1: Business Ideas

One hundred and eleven participants representing 46.6% stated that *the first and major strategy to start-up business is to come up with a business idea*. The learned through the training that the key to coming up with a business idea is identifying something that customers want or, perhaps, more importantly, filling an unmet need. This is one of the areas of the training given to the participants. Also, 154 participants representing 64.7% indicated that *to come up with an innovative business idea, you need to be creative. They said creativity is very important to be*

able to come up with business ideas. Trying to do what others have not done before. These groups of participants have a positive perception of entrepreneurship training in terms of creativity. Creativity is the core of entrepreneurship. Some participants said they have learned through the training that *entrepreneurs are innovators who start companies to create new or improved products*. Entrepreneurs strive to meet a need that's not being met, and their goal is to grow the business and eventually expand into other markets

Theme 2: Industry to enter into

The participants said that another important factor in business start-up is to know the type of business to enter into. The participants stated that they have been exposed to the factors to consider before choosing the type of business, such factors as; *capital, skills, size of the business among others.* Also, 112 participants representing 46.5% said that *the entrepreneurship training has helped them to realize that even if they do not possess enough skill to enter into a business, they can find a team or individual who has the necessary skills or acquires them.*

Theme 3: Capital

This is the most important aspect of a business start-up. Almost all the participants indicated that capital is core and very important for business start-ups. The participants 201 representing 83.4% said that t*hey have learned through the training that entrepreneurs are financed by friends and family, at least in the very early stages. Others may borrow through their accounts, though quite often, high-interest rates make this approach unattractive or too expensive for the new business to afford.* Others can be financed from their savings. Some of the participants 189(79.4%) said that one of the strategies to start-up business is to be competitive in mind. *They affirmed that a new business must adopt the mentality that its success is contingent on winning battles.* You have to fight to the top if you want to succeed. If you do not, your competitors will beat you to the prize. Competition is key to be a successful entrepreneur.

Theme 4: Others

The majority of the participants 209 representing 87.8% said to start a business, an entrepreneur must be focus on his principles. General business practices apply to all industries. An entrepreneur should not get too narrow-minded about specific fields and forget common sense. They said further that business owners must understand all aspects of the business. For example, if you are not an expert in accounting, tax law, finance, or management, it might be wise to seek advice because the entrepreneur cannot afford to make crucial mistakes in these areas. One hundred and six participants representing 44.5% said that one of the strategies to start-up business is to be passionate. If you do not love what you do, do not do it. It is truly as simple as that. They said that an entrepreneur needs to put in long hours and make sacrifices for the success of the business. When one is has passion about what they do, putting in the long hours would not be difficult. Developing a solid strategic business plan is one of the strategies to avoid business failure as identified by 127(53.4%) participants. They affirmed that a well written solid strategic plan provides a pathway to success, also, to be a benchmark against which the manager measures actual performance against the expected. This they said forces the manager to ask and answer crucial questions. Some of the participants said that business failure can be avoided if the entrepreneur will always challenge him/herself. They said that If one wants to be a successful entrepreneur, there is a need to challenge oneself. No person can challenge you better, therefore, it is your responsibility to do it. Setting targets which become like challenges helps entrepreneurs to be up and doing. If one is always looking for the next challenge, they will often be ready for what comes their way they said.

Discussion of Findings

The study also found that entrepreneurship training has a positive impact on the willingness to start-up business for poverty reduction among the youths. This means that entrepreneurship training was able to impact the youths' willingness to start-up a business of their own. This finding supports the earlier finding of Owusu-Ansah (2004) who observed that a lot of people were well motivated to start-up business by the fact that they were trained in entrepreneurship. He further stated that students who have received entrepreneurship education largely have positive attitudes and perception towards self-employment and entrepreneurship willingness. This finding is related to the finding of Mamman (2016) who found that students have acquired knowledge of entrepreneurship education in the areas of basic business start-up, writing of business plan, idea development, Process from idea to realization of astart-up, business model, problem identification and solution development and others. This means that students are acquiring relevant entrepreneurship skills.

The study found that entrepreneurship training has a positive impact on youths' acquisition of the strategies to avoid business failure for poverty reduction. This means that the participants were able to learn the strategies to avoid business failure. The understanding of these strategies will go a long way to help the participants once they start their own business. The skills learned include: Manage your financial resources properly, developing a solid strategic business plan, cultivate a good behavioural attitude towards your workers and customers, learn from prior work experience, developing a diverse set of skills among others. This finding supports the list of Schultz (2019) who stated successful entrepreneurs must understand and work with these strategies: develop a diverse set of skills**,** identify a problem that needs solving, then solve it, surround yourself with people you trust**,** remain curious, get gritty, challenge yourself, be passionate among others.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study which revealed that youths have a positive perception of the effectiveness of entrepreneurship training on willingness and strategies to start-up entrepreneurship business, it was concluded that entrepreneurship training is effective in helping youths to have the willingness and learn the strategies to start-up a business venture. This is because when youths are willing and acquire the right strategies to start a business, then poverty will be a thing of the past. These findings imply that when youths are exposed to entrepreneurship training, it will change their orientation about entrepreneurship and make them understand the strategies to start-up a business. When all these are put into practice by the training participants, it could go a long way to change their financial status for the better and lead to economic growth.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Non-governmental organizations, philanthropists, and well-meaning individuals should organize entrepreneurship training for youths to help create entrepreneurship willingness in them. This will lead to poverty reduction when the willingness is translated into practice.
2. The government at all levels should organize entrepreneurship training programmes for youths to acquire relevant entrepreneurial strategies. which will go a long way to reduce poverty among the youths.

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