



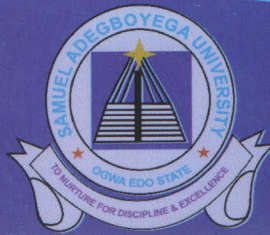
SAMUEL ADEGBOYEGA UNIVERSITY
OGWA EDO STATE



SAU **JOURNAL OF** **HUMANITIES**



Volume 5, Number 1 & 2 June/December, 2017



DR MRS THERESA NFIAM

SAU

JOURNAL OF HUMANITIES

VOLUME 5, NUMBER 1&2
JUNE/DECEMBER, 2017



A Publication of

COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES, 2
SAMUEL ADEGBOYEGA UNIVER 8
OGWA, EDO STATE, NIGERIA 1

Published by

College of Humanities
Samuel Adegboyega University,
P.M.B. 001, Ogwa
Edo State, Nigeria

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College of Humanities
Samuel Adegboyega University,
Ogwa, Edo State, Nigeria

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ISSN: 1597-5827

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3/Sw8, Anfani Layout Ring Road Ibadan, Nigeria
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SUBSCRIPTION RATE

Nigeria - N1500 (One thousand and five hundred naira only) for a single copy

Rest of Africa - \$ 50 (Fifty US Dollars) for a single copy

Europe and U.S.A. - \$100 (One hundred US Dollars) for a single copy

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EDITORIAL COMMENT

This current edition, Vol. V, Numbers 1 and 2 of the SAU Journal of Humanities by the College of Humanities, Samuel Adegboyega University, Ogwa, Edo State presents academic articles from various disciplines in Humanities and inter-disciplinary field, including: Languages, and Linguistics, Literature, History and Diplomatic Studies, Religion, Cultural Studies, Fin and other inter-related disciplines. It is undeniably a brilliant contribution to the global epistemic system from Africa.

Whereas this edition like other editions, would make exciting reading to public and private practitioners, scholars and researchers, and all those who may wish to expand their frontier of knowledge in the humanities; we enjoin you to forward interesting, well researched, policy-oriented, inter-disciplinary articles for peer-review for publication in this increasingly renowned journal.

Professor Bridget O. Inegbeboh

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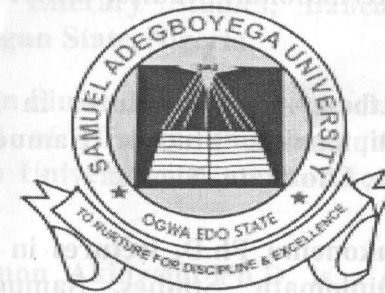
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SAU JOURNAL OF HUMANITIES



VOLUME 5, NUMBER 2
JUNE, 2017

A PUBLICATION OF COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES,
SAMUEL ADEGBOYEGA UNIVERSITY, OGWA,
EDO STATE

Historical Appraisal of Entrepreneurial Opportunities and Poverty Alleviation in Nigeria (A Case Study of Edda, Ebonyi State)

Orji N. Ifeanyi & Odeigah T. Nfam,

Abstract

Over the years, the successive governments both at the Federal and states level have embarked on various programs aimed at providing entrepreneurial opportunities for the citizens. Recently, governments have intensified efforts in reducing poverty through entrepreneurship orientations. This study is aimed at determining the relationship between entrepreneurial opportunities provided by the government and poverty alleviation in Nigeria using Edda community one of the major rice producers in the state of Ebonyi as a yardstick. To achieve this, a correlational survey was conducted on a cross section of youths in the State, and the data gathered was analyzed using multidisciplinary method. However, in the light of the findings through observations and reviewed literature that bother on entrepreneurial opportunities and poverty alleviation, this study concludes that the government has performed abysmally poor, noting that enhancement of human capital; and easy access to financial resources, that make up strategies for poverty alleviation, could be viable means of pursuing entrepreneurial opportunities such as self-employment opportunities, discovery opportunities and as well as creative opportunities, that will eventually translate into economic growth in the State, specifically, and Nigeria as a whole.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship, Poverty, Edda, Opportunities, Alleviation. Nigeria

Introduction

There has been intense focus on the activities that involve self-actualization, discovery and creation of new and better products/processes/opportunities/markets the world over by individuals, researchers, managers and governments of different nations over the last three decades. The entire gamut of these activities is what is known today the world over as entrepreneurship. These interests have emanated as a result of the belief that entrepreneurship is the only way towards self-actualization for the individuals; superior performance for business firms and competition and economic growth for the governments (Gathungu, Aiko & Machuki, 2014). Governments on the one hand believe that entrepreneurship can serve as a tool for easing the burden of governance and as well as expediting instant growth in the economy (Shane, 2008).

There is the general notion that the best means through which nations can achieve economic growth is by alleviating or reducing poverty to the barest minimum through human empowerment, developing strong property rights, and creating access to financial aids for its citizen. Some scholars (e.g. Calero, Bedi, and Sparrow, 2008; Claessens and Laeven, 2003) have proposed 'will spur up the drive' to pursue entrepreneurial opportunities like self-employments, creation and discovery of entrepreneurial activities and subsequent job growth, wealth creation and growth in the economy at large.

This notion may, however, be speculations as there tend to be disagreements amongst some of the researchers that alleviating poverty does not always lead to increase entrepreneurship activities (e.g. Alvarez, Barney and Anderson, 2013; Buenstorf, 2007). Moreover, majority of these studies have come from outside the shores of Nigeria, e.g. Box, Lin, & Gratzner (2014) in Sweden; Alvarez and Barney, (2014) in the United States of America; Calero, Bedi, and Sparrow, (2008) in Ecuador; etc. The few that have been done within Nigeria, e.g. Wosu (2014) have not factored in entrepreneurship; therefore there is limited knowledge as to what is known about the entrepreneurial

opportunity and poverty alleviation relationship in Nigeria, particularly in Edda, Ebonyi State.

This is a very big gap as there is nothing to show whether the various self-employment activities in the state stems out from the human capital development programs by government, or whether the creation in entrepreneurial opportunities have been as a result of government activities, or whether opportunity discovery is as a result of access to financial capital as the rate of poverty in Edda is still observably high despite the fact that Edda is one of the food base of Ebonyi state. Against these backdrops, this study is therefore concerned with historical analysis of discovering the relationship between entrepreneurial opportunities and poverty alleviation and how the relationship has contributed to the growth in the economy of Edda people.

Conceptual Definitions

Udu and Udu, (2015) described entrepreneurship to represent the general process by which economic and commercial activities necessary for the improvement of the standard of living of the society are created by entrepreneurs – individuals, institutions, corporations and government. This description highlights the fact that activities that are devoid of entrepreneurial inclinations, not commercialized or does not follow a formalized process, nor is adding value to life, cannot be regarded as entrepreneurship. This means that not every business activities are entrepreneurial. Entrepreneurship as suggested by researchers (Gathungu, Aiko, & Machuki, 2014; Markovic, 2009; Alvarez and Barney, 2007) is undertaken in every sphere of human endeavors; especially at the individual, firms and state levels. At the state level in particular, government is after competition and economic growth. They pursue entrepreneurship by creating opportunities like improving human capital, providing protection rights to property and access to financial capital for the individuals who in turn create firms (Cohen and Soto, 2007).

Opportunity has been defined in a wide variety of fields like economics, business, entrepreneurship, and strategy, and although these different fields are different in focus, there tend to be

remarkable agreement on the definition of opportunities. This definition centers on the notion that opportunities exist when competitive imperfections exist in factor or product markets. Individuals or firms do not have the potential to generate economic wealth especially in conditions of perfect competition, (Barney, 2009; Casson, 2007; Kirzner, 1979). This study adopts the definition of Alvarez, Barney and Anderson, (2013) that economic wealth can only emerge when competition is not perfect. From the entrepreneurship viewpoint, the entrepreneurs exploit these competitive imperfections and generate economic profits (Schumpeter, 1934 as cited in Alvarez and Barney, 2014). The extent to which entrepreneurs use rare and costly resources to initiate resources and capabilities to exploit these opportunities, enables them become sources of sustained competitive advantage.

However, not all entrepreneurial opportunities are the same. Various authors; Alvarez and Barney (2007), tended to describe various types of opportunities to include; the kinds of human capital, property rights, and financial capital needed to exploit them; and their potential for generating economic growth. For an opportunity to be classified as entrepreneurial therefore, it must involve activities that are geared towards the development of human capital which involves training for self-actualization such as self-employment; permission to acquire and own property such as land, machines and other resources; and access to financial capital like loans or grants that will facilitate the exploitation of the other two. The various dimensions of entrepreneurial opportunities include—self-employment, discovery, and creation (Alvarez and Barney, 2014).

Poverty alleviation has become a buzz word for most government since the last three to four decades now. This concern has stemmed out majorly because of the fact that unemployment has remained an issue for almost every government. More so issues of insecurity, disasters, and other phenomenon like corruption that tend to create divide in class and breeds poverty amongst people have also being on the rise lately. Poverty has been identified by Wosu (2014), as a multi-faceted phenomenon; that changes from place to place and as well as time and season. It

means therefore that poverty is a call for action from the poor and the wealthy alike, a call to change the world so that many more may have enough to eat, adequate shelter, access to education and health, protection from violence and voice in what happens in their communities, (Gbarabe, 2009).

This study adopts the definition of poverty as stipulated in the UNDP report 2006, where poverty is viewed as being sick and not being able to see a Doctor; not having access to school and not knowing how to read and write; not having a job; it is fear for its future, living one day at a time. Poverty is losing a child to illness brought about by unclean water. Poverty is about powerlessness, lack of representation in decision making in the society and lack of freedom to express oneself. Investigations show that various governments have undertaken various strategies to reduce or eradicate traces of poverty from their countries. For instance, Easterly, (as reported in Wosu, 2014) stated that the total expenditures that have been designed to eradicate abject poverty over the past three decades vary; reliable sources put this expense at approximately \$2.3 trillion by the West. Also in Nigeria, various governments have also done their bid to alleviate poverty. Such programs like Petroleum Trust Fund (PTF) of the mid 1990s, Family Support Programs (FSP) in the early 1990s, the Amnesty program, adoption of the goals of MDGs, SURE-P and as well as YouWin programs are a few notable programs that have been embarked upon by the federal government (Forae, 2011).

The aforementioned programs mentioned above by successive governments mainly with intentions of building the human; institutional and financial infrastructures; underpinnings of poverty alleviation and economic growth. Every state in Nigeria, have also embarked on one of such programs in order to eradicate poverty and experience growth in their economy. Ebonyi State in particular, where there have been different workshops to train and empower the youths, and the establishment of various agencies and financial institutions like Ebonyi State Sustainable Development Goal (EBSGD), Ebonyi Microfinance Agency (EMA) etc. to assist in alleviating poverty (Okwor, 2016). It is pathetic to state here that EBSGD has become another means of

Hope Waddel Training Institute in Calabar, established by the Church missionary Society (CMS) in 1895. Apart from those two schools, there was no formally organized technical or vocational education at the post primary or secondary school level (Ola and Joseph, 2013).

Significant progress was made when E.J.R. Hussey who was appointed the Director of Education in 1930 proposed in the same year a programme of expansion in the educational system. He proposed three levels of education: Elementary, Secondary and final stage of Vocational Training to provide well-qualified assistants in the medical, engineering and other vocations as well as teacher of higher middle schools. His recommendations were accepted by the government, thus the Yaba Technical Institute was established in October 1947 (Ola and Joseph 2013). The establishment of Yaba College marked the beginning of Vocational schools we have today in Nigeria that are saddled with the responsibilities of grooming the country's entrepreneurs.

Role of Government towards Poverty Alleviation through Entrepreneurship

Poverty alleviation generally reflects those efforts that are put in place by individuals as well as governments, in order to reduce or eradicate completely their levels of not having. It is the state of moving from not having, to having, not being able to being able (Wosu, 2014). Several of these efforts stem out from activities relating to human capital development, permission to property rights and access to financial capital that are bound to foster opportunities. The role of government in entrepreneurship development in Nigeria became significant only after the Nigeria civil war (1967-70). Since the mid-1980s there has been an increased commitment of government to entrepreneurship development, especially after the introduction of the Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) in 1986. Added to this is the establishment of the National Directorate of Employment (NDE), National Open Apprenticeship Scheme (NOAS) and the Small and Medium Enterprise Development Association of Nigeria (SMEDAN) (Thaddeus, 2012). Fundamentally, the Nigerian

government promotes entrepreneurial culture through initiatives that build business confidence, positive attitude, pride in success, support and encouragement of new ideas, social responsibility, providing technological supports, encouraging inter-firm linkages and promotion of research and development.

In the early 2000s, entrepreneurship studies were introduced into the Nigerian educational curriculum especially in higher institutions as a mandatory course. The Centre for Entrepreneurship Development (CED), which has the objective of teaching and encouraging students of higher institutions (especially in Science, Engineering and Technology (SET)) to acquire entrepreneurial, innovative, and management skills, was established. The Centre's goal was to make the graduates self-employed, create job opportunities for others and to generate wealth (Thaddeus, 2012). He argued further that entrepreneurship development in Nigeria became significant only after the Nigerian civil war. At the end of the war, the 2nd National Development Plan focused on the development of the 3Rs objectives of Reconstruction, Rehabilitation and Reconciliation. The activities in the plan challenged/tasked the ingenuity and inventive skill of the individuals.

This early period witnessed an economic development ideology of industrialization as the ultimate source of economic growth, and industrialization itself as the product of technical progress and investment. Technical progress or capital growth on the other hand is seen to be a function of, and the result of, entrepreneurial effort. In particular, evidence from the developed world indicates that economic growth is entirely due to the quality and efficiency of the entrepreneur. Thus after independence in 1960 there was the need by the government of Nigeria to promote indigenous entrepreneurs. The government never loses sight of the tripartite relationship among entrepreneurship, industrialization and economic growth. Entrepreneurship is often carried out by micro and small scale businesses and therefore SMEDAN's focus is on the development of micro, small and medium-scale enterprises (MSMEs) where it co-ordinates and integrates MSME

activities in order to develop their full potential and competitiveness (Thaddeus, 2012).

In the past four decades or so, the government had established various support institutions specially structured to provide succor and to assist SMEs to contend with some of the hurdles along their growth path. Some of these specialized institutions include the Nigerian Industrial Development Bank (NIDB), the Nigerian Bank for Commerce and Industry (NBCI), the National Economic Reconstruction Fund (NERFUND), the Nigerian Export-Import Bank (NEXIM), the National Directorate of Employment (NDE), Industrial Development Coordinating Centre (IDCC), Peoples Bank, Community Banks, Construction Bank, Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP), State Ministries of Industry SME schemes, the Nigerian Agricultural and Cooperative Development Bank (NACDB), BOI (Bank of Industry) etc.

Problems of Alleviating Poverty through Entrepreneurship

Alvarez and Barney (2014), identified that; human capital, property rights, and access to financial capital are essential prerequisites for entrepreneurial activity, both in developed and less developed economies. That is why all these support institutions and other incentives created by the government have not yielded much result in tackling poverty through entrepreneurship in Nigeria and Edda in particular. Policy instability, policy somersault and reversals in addition to high turnover and frequent changes in government have impacted negatively on the performance of the primary institutions responsible for policy formulation, monitoring and implementation resulting in distortions in the macro-economic structure, low productivity and dismal performance of entrepreneurship developments (Nwachukwu, 2012).

Other major problems which have contributed to the poor performance of entrepreneurship developments include:

Lack of human capital development which is individual's knowledge, skill, ability, and other characteristics that have productive value in workplace contexts (Lepak, Takeuchi, and

Swart, 2011). The role of human capital in economic growth has been emphasized for at least in the last two decades (Cohen and Soto, 2007). Examples of general human capital are the ability to read and write, but it also includes leadership ability, the ability to communicate with and motivate others, the ability to work with others and to solve problems, and so forth (Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 2008; Greenwood, Li, Prakash, and Deephouse, 2005).

Also, Access to financial capital plays a critical role in the emergence of entrepreneurship. Traditional external sources of capital can include banks, friends, family, credit cards, and so forth. However, these sources of financing are often not available in abject poverty stricken communities (Alvarez and Barney, 2014). In abject poverty stricken communities, individuals do not have a credit history comparable with that used in developed countries to qualify for credit cards or loans from banks. Friends and family are often as impoverished as the entrepreneur soliciting for loans. It was as a result of the lack of financial capital in an impoverished context, that microfinance loans were designed to overcome the challenges faced by individual who could not access bank credits. Microfinance loans, typically small, unsecured loans to individuals and groups for the purpose of starting a business, are the development solution to a lack of entrepreneurial capital (Khavul, 2010).

Summarily, the various problems encountered in process of alleviating poverty in Nigeria and Edda in particular include, limited access to long-term capital; high interest rate of short-term financing; poor partnership spirit; dearth of requisite managerial skills and capacity; illegal levies by government officials; street urchins harassments; over-dependence on imported raw materials and spare parts; poor inter and intra-sectoral linkages that make it difficult for the SMEs to enjoy economies of scale production; bureaucratic bottlenecks and inefficiency in the administration /execution of government incentives that discourage rather than promote entrepreneurship growth; low demand for products arising from low and dwindling consumer purchasing power; incidence of multiplicity of government regulatory agencies and taxes that had always resulted in high cost of doing business; and

poor corporate governance and low entrepreneurial skills arising from inadequate educational and technical background for many entrepreneurship promoters.

Conclusions

The goal of this study was to historically appraise government's role in entrepreneurial opportunities and poverty alleviation in Edda, Ebonyi State. Based on extant literature reviewed, it could be said that the presence of entrepreneurial opportunities; self-employment opportunities, discovery opportunities and creative opportunities will help in reducing or eradicating poverty through the enhancement of human capital, improvement of property rights and the easy access to financial resources that will translate into subsequent growth in the economy.

When there is a high level of human capital development or enhancement, there is every tendency that the rate at which individuals see the need to pursue self-employment opportunities will be high, and when this is so, the effect of this on the economy will be growth. Easy access to financial resources should also be top in the agenda of government, policy makers and other stakeholders of Ebonyi State as this has also been suggested to be an indication of poverty in the literature. This can go a long way in assisting the youths in the discovery of opportunities for new venturing and as well as subsequent growth and development of the economy of the state. All these will translate to poverty alleviation and subsequent economic growth.

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