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**THE ENTREPRENEURSHIP LITERACY OF PRE-SERVICE ENGLISH
LANGUAGE TEACHERS: THE NIGERIAN SPECTACLE**

Samson Olusola Olatunji, Ph.D.

Linguistic Immersion Centre for Foreign Students

Faculty of Arts

University of Ilorin

Kwara State

samsholat@gmail.com, olatunji.so@unilorin.edu.ng

Abstract

Among the various results of the increasing understanding of the concept of literacy is its classification into basic literacy and functional literacy. Acquisition of entrepreneurial skills can be conceived as included in the functional dimension of literacy. A graduate from a four-year university programme who is unable demonstrate entrepreneurial acumen but waits helplessly for an uncertain paid employment can be rightly described as functionally illiterate. Many graduates from English Language teacher education programmes are under-employed or unemployed despite the entrepreneurship courses offered to all undergraduates in Nigerian universities. This survey of the ex-post facto type was thus conducted to ascertain the concerned students' assessment of the impacts of such entrepreneurship courses. Responses of three hundred and eleven pre-service English Language teachers got through a multi-stage sampling procedure to a self-constructed twelve-item and validated questionnaire were collated. Frequency counts and percentages were employed in analysing the obtained data to answer three research questions. The findings reveal the respondents' general limited knowledge of employment opportunities open to them, unwillingness to venture into self-employment, and lack of confidence in the entrepreneurship courses offered them, which they judged too general and theoretical. A serious review of the entrepreneurship content is thus recommended.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship, pre-service, employment, undergraduates, literacy.

Background to the Study

The figures of unemployed, underemployed and misemployed graduate and non-graduate youths in Nigeria are staggering: 64 million unemployed and 1.6 million underemployed respectively (Ajufo, 2013). Since over 70% of Nigerians are unemployed (Adebayo, 2013), it should not be surprising that over 70% of Nigerians live below the level of living described by the United Nations as the poverty line (Okediran & Olatunji, 2010). Many social vices (like armed robbery, destitution, prostitution, political hooliganism, kidnapping and so on) are on the increase as logical fallout from the unemployment problem (Ajufo, 2013; Omosewo, Akanmu & Asebiomo, 2013).

Lack of entrepreneurial skills has been identified as a major factor militating against most of the unemployed graduates who are youths (Katsina, 2010) and this has been largely blamed on curricular deficiency (Ajufo, 2013). This is why it has been pointed out that most Nigerians are being educated out of context (Inegbenebor, 2005). Among the efforts at addressing the curricular deficiency is the stipulation by the National Universities Commission that every university must offer a compulsory general course in

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entrepreneurship to all undergraduates. But many universities are yet to adopt and implement the draft curriculum on entrepreneurship skills acquisition programmes that resulted from the concerted efforts of the National Universities Commission (NUC), the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC), and the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) (Ukpong, 2013).

Realising that capability for self-employment is the surest safeguard against unemployment, underemployment and misemployment, education policy makers, planners and implementers are taking measures to ensure students acquire entrepreneurial skills at the tertiary education level through the introduction of courses in entrepreneurship carried on in different forms in different institutions. The course in entrepreneurship education is a compulsory course in the General Studies Unit of every university (Adejimola & Olufunmilayo, 2009).

But a close study of the efforts at imparting entrepreneurial skills would, however, reveal a tilt towards craftsmanship. This now raises the question of appropriateness to students whose biases are for the disciplines with non-tangible contents like the Languages, of which English is major. Gbosi (2005) acknowledges that the chances of paid employment for the thousands of Liberal Arts graduates turned out yearly by our educational institutions are very slim because the supply greatly outweighs demand.

This situation calls for worry concerning the job prospects of pre-service English Language teachers. For example, English Language teaching does not feature among the twenty-degree courses with best employment opportunities in Nigeria compiled by Students in Articles (2014) while Language comes eleventh in the list of courses with the worst courses in terms employment prospects in the same document.

The perennial abysmal failure recorded in English Language by Nigerian candidates in such major and decisive examinations as the Senior Secondary Certificate Examinations organised separately by the West African Examinations Council and the National Examination Council (Ayodele, 2001; Kolawole & Olatunji, 2006; Offorma, 2010) should have been logically expected to be a lucrative venture because a teeming population of Nigerian youths' dreams of tertiary education are being put on hold because they have not been able to obtain the mandatory credit pass in the subject. The teeming unemployed youths that graduated from English Language teacher education programmes could have created a good market for themselves providing extra-mural education services for the tertiary education hopefuls that are still struggling to make the required credit level pass. But instead of looking into such opportunities, the graduates of English Education programmes are going through untold hardships as a result of joblessness. Many others have resorted to anti-social means of eking out a living.

Another situation that the hitherto unemployed graduates of English Language teacher education programmes should be able to exploit is many Nigerian adults' desire for proficiency in the language for reasons of prestige, business, travels, and so on. Arising from the universal relevance of the English language (Cristal, 2012; Crystal 2000), its status and functions in the Nigerian life (Osisanwo, 2005) as well as the widely reported inordinate desire of most Nigerians to Anglicise themselves by all means (Adegbija, 1994; Owolabi,

2006; Fakoya, 2008), there are many more potential market openings for the teeming graduates of English Language. That most of such graduates are unemployed is thus a serious paradox that needs to be explained.

Admirably, some teachers of Spanish in Guatemala have become sterling examples of entrepreneurs by earning \$200,000 USD in lesson fees by organising worldwide online Spanish classes via video conferencing. An additional advantage is that they set their own time and fees (Cooper, 2011). One could reasonably conjecture that such Spanish teachers must have had a good advantage of entrepreneurial content in their training while their Nigerian counterparts prepared to teach English lacked such privilege. But surprisingly, two of the goals of teacher education stated in the National Policy on Education in Nigeria are "helping teachers fit into the social life of the community and the society at large and to enhance their commitment to national goals; and providing teachers with the intellectual and professional background adequate for their assignment and to make them adaptable to changing conditions" (FGN, 2004; Keshinro & Akeusola, 2015). The joblessness and imposed idleness of numerous products of the English Language teacher education is in flagrant defiance of the goals. There must be some deficiency in the implementation of the curriculum designed to actualise the goal or the curriculum itself is faulty.

Hassan's (2013) observation that lack of awareness of business opportunities as one of the serious challenges to entrepreneurs and prospective entrepreneurs in Nigeria is thus justified. A study conducted by Akpan (2013) too reveals that the participating lecturers rated information skill as the foremost sub-skill of entrepreneurial skill. It could then be conjectured that lack of awareness of the opportunity for English Language teachers that is inherent in the place of prominence given English Language vis-a-vis students' consistent high failure rate in the subject is a major cause of the widespread unemployment of English Language graduate teachers in Nigeria. Statistically valid evidence, however, needs to be sought to verify the claim.

The other soft skills required for successful entrepreneurship which the undergraduates are supposed to be taught include thinking skills, analytical and problem-solving skills as well as personal skills, working with others, presentation, problem-solving and managing own learning (Anarfi & Appiah, 2012), communication and teamwork abilities, flexibility, motivation and problem-solving skills (Hietanen & Kesälahti, 2017). Ngang (2011) includes leadership skill, life-long learning, ethics, and morals and adds that surveys and empirical researches have proved that employers are more concerned with mastery of soft skills rather than the traditional attitudes of emphasizing technical skills. There is, therefore, no reason students of liberal arts should be disadvantaged in the scheme of entrepreneurship education. With these and other skills added to the language content, most Nigerian pre-service English Language teachers should be sure of being gainfully employed by government, corporations or selves.

Entrepreneurship also entails and requires risk-taking. Anene and Imam (2011) have observed that a major distinguishing trait of entrepreneurial competence is the ability to take risks independently. Adeyemo (2009) describes a person with entrepreneurial skills as one who is ever ready to take responsibility for the risks that are inherent in a venture as well as

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the outcomes. If the English Language teachers produced by Nigerian universities are not taking up entrepreneurship practices in order to exploit the robust market occasioned by the vast population of secondary school leavers that are ready to pay heavily to master English Language as a pre-requisite for university education, it is possible that fear of the unknown is one of the factors responsible.

The European Commission Enterprise and Industry Directorate-General (2008) recommends that, to a great extent, practising entrepreneurs should be engaged in the teaching of entrepreneurship so that their real-life experience may constitute major inputs, thus giving the students a clear insight into the realities of the world of competitive business rather than the idealistic principles and philosophies of the university environment. Naudé (2013) too advances three different reasons entrepreneurship should be accorded serious attention as:

1. Entrepreneurship is a catalyst to economic development;
2. Entrepreneurship drives poverty reduction in nations, like China, that have embraced it for about a decade now; and
3. The attraction of international development agencies and donors to entrepreneurship has significantly increased lately.

Purpose of this Study

The study seeks to ascertain the degree to which pre-service English Language teachers in Nigeria perceive themselves as adequately prepared by the entrepreneurship contents of their programmes for the challenges of self-employment in their fields.

Methodology

A multi-stage sampling procedure was adopted. Four universities that run faculties training teachers of English language in south-western Nigeria were randomly sampled in the south-western region of Nigeria. Four hundred level Education-English students were also purposively sampled so that the participants may be those that have had almost all that their respective universities offer. Forty percent of the population of four hundred level English Education students in each of the participating universities were randomly sampled. A total of three hundred and eleven pre-service English Language teachers responded to the research instrument.

A self-constructed 12-item and validated (91.03 Cronbach Alpha) questionnaire named **Entrepreneurship for English Language Teacher Education Programme Questionnaire (EELTEPQ)** was used for data collection. Three of the items seek information on the respondents' awareness of self-employment opportunities for trained English language teachers, three also aim at verifying the respondents' interest in self-employment, two items interrogate their plan for self-employment after graduation, while four investigate their personal assessment of the entrepreneurship contents of their training programme.

Copies of the questionnaire were personally administered by the researcher to the respondents in their respective universities and retrieved immediately to prevent loss. The

statistical tools of frequency counts and percentages were employed to analyse the data collected in answering four research questions.

Findings

Research Question 1: *What is the scope of the Nigerian pre-service English language teachers' awareness of entrepreneurship opportunities?*

Table 1: Scope of Nigerian Pre-Service English Language Teachers' Entrepreneurship Opportunities Awareness

Identified prospects of English language teacher education programmes	Responses
English Language Teaching in schools	311 (100%)
Working as language editors in publishing companies	107 (34.41%)
Broadcasting	198 (63.67%)
Establishing own schools	56 (18.01%)

Table 1 shows that English Language teaching is the only employment prospect commonly known to 100% of the respondents. Only 34.41% of the respondents remembered to include working as language editors in publishing companies as a job prospect, 63.67% remembered the possibility of working as broadcasters while only 18.01% indicated that establishing one's own schools is another job opportunity open to graduates of English Language teacher education in Nigeria. The answer to Research Question 1, therefore, is that the scope of entrepreneurship opportunities that the pre-service English Language teachers are aware of is very narrow.

It is not in the spirit of entrepreneurship that establishing private schools is the only option that reflects self-employment and employment generation among the market possibilities identified by the respondents, and that was even by only 18.01% of them. Also, a huge capital base is required to establish a school of modest standard in present-day Nigeria. The current harsh economic realities in Nigeria have taken the required capital beyond the easy reach of an average citizen while those who start too low-risk frequent sanctions from various concerned government agencies like the ministry of education, environmental sanitation agencies, town planning authorities and others. The type of customer base that an extremely low starter attracts can also be too discouraging. It is thus safe to conclude that a very much smaller percentage of the 18.01% that indicated school proprietorship as an option would not dare go near such venture.

Paid employment as language teachers is the idea common to all the respondents. But earlier studies have indicated that those forced to enrol in language teacher education programmes by unpleasant circumstances are always in the majority (Aduwa-Ogiegbaen & Uwameiye, 2005; Osunde & Izevbigie, 2006; Faniran & Olatunji, 2011). Most of them

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spend their first few years of service with the illusion that they would soon get opportunities into "greener pastures" or "better" professions. Some of them resign to fate almost too late. Their productivity is thus generally deficient because of the false sense of having been trapped in an undesirable occupation (Ferrero, 2003). How entrepreneurship ideas can flourish in the minds of such discontented workers remains mere wishful thinking (Benn, 2010).

Research Question 2: *What is the rate of the Nigerian pre-service English Language teachers' professed interest in entrepreneurship?*

Table 2: A Measure of the Nigerian Pre-service English Language Teachers' Professed Interest in Entrepreneurship

Response Item	Yes	No
Entrepreneurship is as safe as a source of income as salaried employment in Nigeria.	178 (57.23%)	133 (42.77%)
The prospects in personal businesses are as good as the assurance of regular monthly income from salaried jobs in Nigeria.	173 (55.63%)	138 (44.37%)
I would rather go into a personal enterprise than struggle for limited paid jobs.	102 (32.80%)	209 (67.20%)
Total	453 (48.55%)	480 (51.45%)

Table 2 indicates that the responses portraying disinterest in entrepreneurship (480 or 51.45%) outweigh those expressing interest (453 or 48.55%). The answer to Research Question 2 is thus that the rate of the Nigerian pre-service English Language teachers' professed interest in entrepreneurship is low. This means the components of the entrepreneurship literacy dealing with the affective domain have not been adequate in addressing the students' apprehension about entrepreneurship. The stark realities of economic hostilities to entrepreneurship in Nigeria require that extra efforts be put into conditioning a typical youth for the positive mental attitude needed to venture into self-employment.

Research Question 3: *What is the pre-service English Language teachers' rating of the effectiveness of the entrepreneurship education offered by their universities?*

Table 3: The Respondents' Rating of the Entrepreneurship Education Offered them by their Universities

Response Item	Yes	No
The course in entrepreneurship offered to English Language students in my school is a balanced mix of theory and practicals.	72 (23.15%)	239 (76.85%)
The entrepreneurship course offered to English Language students in my school is adequate in quantity and quality.	67 (21.54%)	244 (78.46%)
The entrepreneurship course offered to us has adequately equipped me for self-employment.	71 (22.83%)	240 (77.17%)
Total	210 (22.51%)	723 (77.49%)

The total of responses indicating adequacy of the entrepreneurship education was 210 (22.51%) while 723 (77.49%) signified dissatisfaction with the effectiveness of the entrepreneurship education in preparing the beneficiaries for the challenges of entrepreneurship. The obvious answer to Research Question 3 is that the pre-service English Language teachers rate the entrepreneurship literacy offered them low in effectiveness. This shows that both content and mode of delivery of the entrepreneurship literacy courses need to be looked into critically and upgraded for higher level effectiveness.

Conclusion

The study has shown that the entrepreneurship education offered pre-service English Language teachers has not been a total failure but far from achieving its objectives in this particular target population. It has not succeeded in helping the beneficiaries to discover enough areas of entrepreneurship related to the students' speciality that they can venture into after graduation. It has hitherto been weak in arousing the recipients' interest in entrepreneurship. The course has not been able to instil enough sense of self-efficacy in entrepreneurship in its recipients. All these are strongly indicative of the need to overhaul the entire programme for greater effectiveness.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made based on the findings of the study:

1. There should be an overhaul of the entrepreneurship literacy package offered pre-service English Language teachers in Nigerian tertiary institutions. Topics that are too theoretical should either be greatly modified or completely removed. Practical skill development contents should be injected and, in fact, should dominate the learning content.
2. The pre-service teachers should be taken on frequent field trips to relevant companies and organisations to learn by experience the skills being employed by the managers of such enterprises. Also, successful entrepreneurs in language-based

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enterprises could be invited to give talks to the students on the secrets of their success.

3. The English Language teacher education departments in Nigeria should give adequate attention to research that will lead to the discovery of hitherto untapped entrepreneurship opportunities open to language experts.
4. The number of entrepreneurship courses offered the pre-service teachers need to be significantly increased to provide opportunities for ample learning.
5. The psycho-social dynamics of successful entrepreneurship should be emphasised because no matter the degree of skill acquisition has been achieved by any student in a formal education system, the daunting realities of the Nigerian economy can intimidate the recipient into non-action.
6. The departments for pre-service English Language teachers could require their students to do a supervised entrepreneurship project. Material support can be provided as deemed necessary. Assistance offered for the success may be continued after graduation provided the entrepreneur so desires. The schools could also use the strength of their corporate reputation to secure soft loans for any entrepreneurship found viable.

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