
CREATING OPPORTUNITIES FOR ARTISANS' ENTREPRENEURSHIP
DEVELOPMENT IN THE RURAL CONTEXT OF NIGERIA.

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Abstract

The study aims at exploring access to recent interventions designed towards intervening in the entrepreneurial life of rural people to ascertain the level at which rural artisans' benefitted. A virtual trace approach (VTA) methodology was deployed together with an empirical investigation using focused group discussions (FGD) as a tool to examine the impact of such interventions in three rural communities in Niger State, Nigeria. The study found that there is no impact felt in the rural communities and aside that there has been no provision for trainings that will make artisans' entrepreneurship mentorship accessible to rural people which would place the rural communities on the path of development. It was therefore recommended that a suitable policy arrangement in terms of promoting and nurturing artisans' entrepreneurial spirit alongside financial support in this regard is suggested to reduce rural poverty.

Keywords: *Artisans' entrepreneurship development, rural communities, virtual trace approach, Nigeria.*

Introduction

The significance of developing artisans' entrepreneurship and its contribution to social and economic development in Africa has been extensively documented. However, Devine & Kiggundu (2016) signaled that while this is an extensively held need, entrepreneurship education and training is poorly organized and asymmetrical. This one sidedness is understood in the fact that the urban centers are still much more favoured in the aspect of trainings and entrepreneurial development, forgetting that rural entrepreneurs are at the bottom of natural capital required by entrepreneurs' world over as they are mostly considered agents of change at the bottom of pyramids. Nigeria is facing high rate of unemployment among young people and in the last two decades, especially with the return of democracy in 1999 many entrepreneurial support policies have been formulated and implemented with majority of it devoid of any success. By implication, not so many empirical research has been conducted to investigate the reasons for the disappointments and failures of

such government policies. The current study is quite different from the many available literatures centered on policy impacts, but rather it is carried out to fill the gap of the disproportion of such kinds of studies in the rural context. The paper explores government's hiatuses in the implementation of artisans' entrepreneurship programs to check unemployment within the rural context.

Rational behind this Paper

Why is it essential to draw attention to artisans' entrepreneurship development within the rural context of Nigeria? The justification for drawing support for rural artisans' entrepreneurship development is its potential to create employment opportunities, improve livelihood and household income. Hence, if the establishment of small business clusters using resources at hand, indigenous knowledge and skills can contribute substantively to job creation within the rural settings and only a few benefit where there is increasing numbers of rural dwellers who are being marginalized, it makes a lot of sense from competence perception to explore the introduction of artisans' entrepreneurship development trainings as part of government policies intended to empower rural Nigerian people. Also, another justification for pursuing artisans' entrepreneurship development in the rural areas of Nigeria has connections with welfare and wellbeing enhancement. Poverty alleviation programs directed at rural women and youths' empowerment on entrepreneurship are essential and worthy of doing; as with entrepreneurship, rural dwellers can earn and create their own means of livelihood, support their basic needs and that of their families through the income they generate from their own entrepreneurial undertakings. However, contributing to their social and economic stability is also a necessity. Various enquiries support this justification with the credence that self-employment and entrepreneurship may increase rural entrepreneurs' self-esteem and confidence (Soomro & Shah, 2015) thereby mitigating rural urban migration and better control over means of livelihood.

Entrepreneurship Hypothetical Review

Certainty entrepreneurship is implicitly based on the indispensable developmental configurations which are subjective to social, economic and educational influences, any effort intended towards supporting entrepreneurs ought to recognize these influences and improve on effective entrepreneurial interventions to increase national entrepreneurial activities in Nigeria. In the World Bank ranking of Global Entrepreneurship Index (GEI), Nigeria was placed on an index of 19.75 in 2018 and it rose by 5.33% in the following year which signifies that it rose to 20.8 in 2019. This is a swing to progress compared to what is obtained in many developing countries. However, the establishment of new businesses shouldn't be over accentuated as not all businesses that are created subsist and develop into sustainable enterprises that are capable of contributing to general economic growth through wealth creation. The GEI divulges the stumpy level of creation of new businesses in Nigeria. For more entrepreneurs to be trained and established, there is a need to pact with social,

economic and educational influences which impact on entrepreneurial performance through constant trainings, mentorship and interventions.

The hypothetical exploration of theories underpinning informal entrepreneurial training, learning and development necessary to tackle the multifaceted rural entrepreneurship dimension, which if operative and functioning, would lead to better construction of new entrepreneurial thinking which can lead to creativity and innovation within the rural context. These theories are very important because there is a need to transform rural entrepreneurship and look out for rural societies where sustainable entrepreneurial activities can take place. Hence, training and learning must be done correctly, and this contention is backed up by the assertion of Ndedi (2013) training and learning plays essential role in increasing entrepreneurial skills and allotment of new innovations in numerous sphere of economic development. Other scholars such as Jusoh et al., (2011) and Kummitha & Kummitha (2021).

A unique description was given to rurality of entrepreneurship by Stathopoulou et al., (2004) where they asserted that "Rurality offers an innovative and entrepreneurial milieu in which rural enterprises may flourish and prosper or become inhibited". This empathetic description shows that an entrepreneur is a cultured person, pertinently reinforced by smart level of thinking, which only training can make possible. Ostensibly, the uneven opportunities provided in favour of some entrepreneurs especially amongst those in the urban areas has become so glaring especially in the last two decades. The work of Okeke & Nwankwo (2017) supports this opinion; they testified that, the percentage of rural entrepreneurs in Nigeria who have confidence in developing the skills to twitch new businesses is suggestively lower than that of the entrepreneurs in the urban areas. The numerous classifications of entrepreneurship point out the intricacy of an entrepreneur. Also with the fact that entrepreneurship can be cultured, studied and used, its development in a country like Nigeria can be reinforced.

Methodology and Data Collection

The methodology used to collect data for this article was dual; first, virtual trace approach (VTA) was deployed for online searching of interventions on promoting rural entrepreneurship in Nigeria. A review of intervening opportunities geared towards promotion of rural entrepreneurship was prioritize. Working documents from the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA), Ministry of Environment Parks, Gardens and forest Resources (MoEPG&FR), Ministry of Trade and Commerce (MoT&C), Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development (MoWA&SD), Bank of Industry (BOI) and NIRSAL were used resource material to identify the interventions carried out to support rural entrepreneurship. Though this source of materials did not capture the feelings of the target groups but rather the terms of references for intervention, work being done by government agencies and the beneficiaries while the second source of data was gotten from the empirical investigation which was carried out using focused

group discussions (FGD) to examine the impact of such interventions in three rural communities in Niger State, Nigeria. In addition, review of documents was also excerpted from the submissions of two non-governmental organizations; Deutsche Gesellschaft fur Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) and FADAMA A World Bank, Federal & State Government Assisted Project



Figure: Focused Group Discussion (FGD) Sessions with Rural Dwellers

Findings and Discussions

A presentation of the remarkable themes that were generated from the review and interactions which was suggested by the participants shall form the basis of the argument in this section. From the checklist, questions related to the present strategies on rural entrepreneurial development showed that information asymmetry is a key issue. Review of documents suggest new approach in tackling issues related to artisans' entrepreneurship development. The themes generated from the questions related to challenges faced in designing and implementing interventions relating to trainings and empowerment pop out quite a number of issues: for instance, constraints related to geographical locations and terrains came out strongly as it is found in the work of Babalola & Agbenyegah (2016). Also cost of implementation of projects is another form of challenge. Similarly, inadequate or bad information coupled with indigenous culture of the areas to target pose another challenge to the development of artisans' entrepreneurship development this is in line with the work of (Okeke & Nwankwo, 2017; Igwe et al., 2018). Rate of structured business training is low in Nigeria compared to the other developing countries. Spending on skills and innovative work which can promise imminent growth and employment, is very low, especially among the rural entrepreneurs. There is deficiency of excellent

management. As skills development interventions do not seem to be mandated within the rural context. Whilst some of the interventions are impractical and too short-timed for the anticipated impact.

Informal entrepreneurial knowledge sharing seeks to provide prospective entrepreneurs with the information, awareness, skills and incentive to encourage entrepreneurial accomplishment in multiplicity of situations. A policy for informal entrepreneurship learning is a strategy to support the individual's capability to see and exploit entrepreneurial opportunities in an economic, spatial and cultural context. Formal entrepreneurship education includes developing both talents and attitudes for proper information and skills that will give entrepreneurs the required knowledge in entrepreneurship. Individual talents and attitudes intensify the likelihood of people to see prospects by thinking about new ideas and transform them into business reality. Informal entrepreneurship development must largely place importance on the development of individual talents and attitudes. Surely, a foundation is laid for future application of knowledge and skills in dynamic value formation of entrepreneurship by so doing (Semkunde et al., 2021). Such kind of understanding of how skills are developed are important prerequisites for job creation within the rural context.

To positively address unemployment among rural dwellers especially those who are out of school, some critical infrastructure need to be developed in preparation for training of prospective entrepreneurs through non-governmental organizations and local stakeholders. Empowerment programs geared towards trainings must be designed in such a way that it would present the concept of entrepreneurship beyond what it is touted to be and there must be practical know-how with a working prototypes for rural entrepreneurs to develop skills. The ethics of entrepreneurship must be regarded as a valuable instrument for rural entrepreneurs at the grassroots. In response to the swiftly mutable national setting, not only high rate of unemployment is pulling down the economy but more generally of dawdling economic growth cum job creation, entrepreneurship is being progressively emphasized as a critical resource (Vlados, 2021; Dawson). Similarly, Salehi et al., (2019) identified that there is no supernumerary procedure for essentially starting a business, but it is possible to uncover rural entrepreneurs in all aspect of the rural economy and engrosses them in key learning experiences using mentorship.

Relating to this point on rural entrepreneurs' capacity building in rural entrepreneurship, a multi-dimensional policy, going from hubs and clusters of training, is required. For a long period of time, many artisans' in all areas explored have not received trainings in entrepreneurship. However, many skill centers have been engaged in numerous empowerment programs working to fill this crack on the training of prospective entrepreneurs in the urban settings. In summary, artisans' entrepreneurship development seeks to prepare artisan entrepreneurs, predominantly youth, to be liable and in control, so that they can become enterprising personalities who will become entrepreneurs by submersing them in real-life erudition

practices where they can take risks, accomplish the results of the risk taken, and learn from the results.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The existent challenge is how to build multi-disciplinary methodologies to tackle the challenges mentioned in developing rural entrepreneurship i.e. creating entrepreneurship education opportunities and making it accessible to both educated and uneducated members of the society especially to all rural entrepreneurs, and where applicable, building rural entrepreneurs capability for the expansion and exploitation of sustaining business ideas, requires socializing rural entrepreneurs who are at the foot of raw material with urban entrepreneurs who have been exposed to various innovations. Modernization and value evolves predominantly from action preoccupied with training of rural entrepreneurs on what is useful so that they may appreciate efforts of intervention managers. The individuals providing the trainings should have artisans' entrepreneurs' mindset themselves, structuring their involvement on realistic capability. Tutors of such trainings should have the required instructional experiences as well as real specialized skill within the rural context. For those with no skills, that are suitable for rural dwellers, explicit coaching components should be combined into the available knowledge within their domain.

Therefore, this paper concludes that Nigeria has established various ministries and agencies of government that have the mandate to develop rural entrepreneurship. However, very diminutive interventions have taken place within the rural context and even shoddier is the fact that rural entrepreneurial development has been outshined by urban entrepreneurial development. This study recommends that a suitable policy arrangement in terms of promoting and nurturing artisans' entrepreneurial spirit alongside financial support in this regard is suggested. Whilst, the Nigerian government needs to reconsider their intervention activities in order to capture the challenges of developing rural entrepreneurs especially the artisans, this can be achieved by working together with non-governmental organizations and donor agencies to provide the essential support services.

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