
**APPRAISAL OF GRADUATE SELF EMPLOYMENT IN
OWERRI MUNICIPAL COUNCIL AND ITS IMPLICATIONS
FOR ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION IN TERTIARY
SCHOOLS**

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Abstract

The study surveyed the factors relating to self employment of graduates in Owerri Municipal Council of Imo State. It was guided by four research questions. The sample for the investigation comprised one hundred and seventy six self employed graduates from universities, polytechnics and colleges of education. The instrument used for data collection was a researchers' constructed structured questionnaire.

Data were analyzed using mean statistic. The findings showed that majority of the graduates were not self employed in the disciplines they had studied. Findings also showed that most of the self employed graduates were running small scale businesses as they pursued other employment opportunities. The researchers recommended that government and other employment agencies should provide capacity building programmes for self employed graduate enterprisers.

The wealth and progress of a nation depend very much on the quality of its active population. Graduates from various tertiary institutions constitute a potential productive proportion of the population. If they are enterprising, and have enough courage to bear risk, they are likely to undertake productive ventures irrespective of inherent challenges.

The Federal and State Governments of Nigeria for some years have put in place various institutional frameworks to promote small scale enterprises in the country. These include the establishment of Industrial Development Centers (IDCS), the Small Scale Industries Credit Scheme, Credit Guidelines to Financial Institution, Working For Yourself/Entrepreneurship Development Programme (WFYP/EDP) National Economic Reconstruction Fund (NERF) and others. There have also been schemes aimed at encouraging self employment especially of graduates. The need to encourage self employment of graduates has increased due to the high rate of unemployment and its economic and social implications in the society.

There is no doubt that unemployment plays a major role in making graduates seek one type of self employment or the other. Anita (2013) investigated effects of unemployment among school leavers in Otukpo, Benue State. The researcher reported that among other effects that some school leavers resorted to learning trades and doing some unskilled jobs in order to maintain themselves while applying for jobs.

Timus (2012) advised that the entrepreneurship education received at school could provide motivations for school leavers to open up private businesses rather than waiting or seeking to be employed. Entrepreneurship education seeks to provide students with the knowledge, skills and motivation to encourage entrepreneurial success in a variety of settings. Variations of entrepreneurship education are offered at all levels of schooling from primary or secondary schools through graduate university programs.

Entrepreneurship education focuses on realization of opportunity, where management education is focused on the best way to operate existing hierarchies. Both approaches share an interest in achieving "profit" in some form (which in non-profit organizations or government can take the form of increased services or decreased cost or increased responsiveness to the customer or client.

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Entrepreneurship education can be oriented towards different ways of realizing opportunities. The most popular one is regular entrepreneurship: *opening a new organization* (e.g. starting a new business) A recent approach involves *creating charitable organizations* (or portions of existing charities) which are designed to be self-supporting in addition to doing their good works. This is usually called social entrepreneurship or social venturing entrepreneurship combined with land, labor, natural resources and capital can produce profit. Entrepreneurial spirit is characterized by innovation and risk-taking, and is an essential part of a nation's ability to succeed.

Junas (2013), reported that other factors which could encourage school leavers to take up self employment include the occupational background of the family and encouragement received from those who may have succeeded in their self employment endeavour after leaving school. He noted that the success stories of certain business enterprisers make them role models for some young ones.

In the Owerri Municipal Council of Imo State, there are graduates who are engaged in self employment. Some of them are getting on successfully while others may be grappling with various challenges. It has become necessary to investigate the motivations and challenges of self employed graduate enterprisers so as to open up ways to provide them with counselling as well as other necessary encouragement. The study was guided by four research questions which included 1. What are the small scale businesses undertaken by graduates? 2. What are the motivations for undertaking self employment? 3. What is the relationship between one's course of study and self employment? 4. What are the challenges faced by self employed graduates?

Methodology

This study was a descriptive survey. This implies that data for the study were obtained from the self employed graduates in the Owerri Municipal Council of Imo State. The population of the study comprised one hundred and seventy six self employed graduates which also formed an intact and purposive sample for the study. The instrument for data collection was a researchers' developed questionnaire entitled Graduate Enterprisers Survey Questionnaire (GESQ) The instrument has sections A and B for the respondents. Section A was used to obtain information about the respondents, such as gender and discipline of study. Part B contained thirty items focused on the research questions. The response pattern was the modified four point Likert type scale.

The instrument was constructed by the researchers and validated by three experts; one in Educational Psychology and the other two in Measurement and Evaluation. These experts were lecturers in institutions of higher learning. They were given copies of the purpose and objectives of the research and a copy of the questionnaire. They were requested to consider the relevance of the items to the research objectives and the adequacy of the items. Their comments helped in

restructuring the items. Following their inputs, some items were modified while others were replaced.

The questionnaire was tested for reliability using the test retest technique. It was administered on a twenty self employed graduates from Umuahia in Abia State two times with two weeks interval. The researchers used Pearson's Product Moment Statistics to compute the index of relationship. The correlation coefficient calculated on the two observations was 0.86. This was considered high and reliable for the study. The data were presented in tables and frequencies. Frequency counts were used to answer the research questions.

Results

Data were arranged in tables and analyzed according to the order of the research questions.

Research Question 1

1. What are the small scale businesses undertaken by graduates?

The analysis employed frequency count statistics and is presented on the table that follows:

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Table 1 Types of Small Scale Businesses of Self Employed Graduates

S/N	Item statement	tallies	Frequencies
1	Keke NAPEP/ taxi transport services	 	23
2	Dress making		7
3	Book writing		1
4	Marketing of Food supplements		11
5	Book binding		10
6	Computer business centre		8
7	Repair of automobiles / electrical items		21
8	Public entertaining		5
9	Laundry		6
10	Sales of fairly used clothes		16
11	Furniture making, carpentry, welding, and others		6
12	Private school proprietorship		3
13	Production of soaps, creams, detergents and other chemicals		6
14	Preparation of cakes, ice creams and other food products		12
15	Poultry, piggery and other forms of animal production		4
16	Sale of food in restaurants		8
17	Cultivation of crops		2
18	Barbing/ hair dressing salon		4
19	Photography		10
20	Repair of cell phones		13
	Total		176

The data presented on table 1 showed that the small scale businesses run by graduates included Keke NAPEP/ taxi transport services, dress making, book writing, marketing of food supplements and book binding. Others were Computer business centre, repair of automobiles / electrical items, public entertaining, laundry, sales of fairly used clothes, furniture making, carpentry, welding, and others, private school proprietorship, production of soaps, creams, detergents and other chemicals, preparation of cakes, ice creams and other food products, poultry, piggery and other forms of animal production and sale of food in restaurants. Yet others were engaged in

cultivation of crops, barbing/ hair dressing salon, photography and repair of cell phones

Research Question 2 What are the motivations for undertaking self employment?
The analysis of data is presented on the table that follows.

Table 2. Motivations for Self Employment of Graduates

S/n	Items	\bar{X}	Result
1	Encouraged by someone who has succeeded in self employment	2.88	Agree
2	Desire to develop self entrepreneurial qualities	2.17	Disagree
3	Was formerly skilled before pursuing higher studies	2.75	Agree
4	Was motivated by entrepreneurial education received at school	2.16	Disagree
5	The business was already in the family	2.59	Agree
6	Desire to make high profits	2.4	Disagree
7	Received assistance from government and or any other agency	2.04	Disagree
8	Unemployment	3.04	Agree
9	Perceived that the business environment was favourable	2.61	Agree
10	Just waiting for other job opportunities	2.88	Agree

Analysis of data presented on table 2 showed that the factors which motivated the self employment desire of graduates were that someone who had succeeded in self

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employment encouraged them to do so. Some of them were formerly skilled before pursuing higher studies and some had such business already in their family. Some perceived that the business environment was favourable while some were only waiting for other job opportunities. These factors were rated up to and above the expected mean of 2.5 and were considered significant.

Research Question 3; What is the relationship between graduate self employment and course of study?

The analysis of data is presented on the table that follows.

Table 3. Analysis of relationship between self employment and course of study

S/N	Identified sources	N	%
1	Self employment directly on course of study	11	6.2
2	Self employment related to course of study	58	33
3	Self employment unrelated to course of study	107	60.8

The analysis of data presented on table 3 showed that majority (60.8%) of the investigated group of graduates were engaged in self employments that were not related to the courses they studied. The analysis also showed that 33% were engaged in self employments that were partly related to the courses they studied in the tertiary schools. Only 6.2% were on self employment that actually derived from the courses they graduated in.

Research Question 4. What challenges are faced by self employed graduates

The analysis of data is presented on the table that follows.

Table 2. Challenges faced by self employed graduates

S/N	ITEMS	X	Result
1	Poor start up capital	2.88	Agree
2	Indecision as to whether to remain on self employment or seek other employment	2.77	Agree
3	Low morale due to discouragement from other people	2.75	Agree
4	Lack of sufficient knowledge of business management	2.61	Agree
5	Poor provision of enabling infrastructure eg water, electricity	2.93	Agree
6	Poor security of life and property	2.4	Disagree

7	High cost of licensing	2.64	Agree
8	High taxation leading to poor turnover	3.04	Agree
9	Poor patronage by consumers / users of service	2.96	Agree
10	Competitiveness of the business	2.88	Agree

The analysis of data presented on table 4 showed that the challenges faced by self employed graduates included poor start up capital, indecision as to whether to remain on self employment or seek other employments, low morale due to discouragement from other people and lack of sufficient knowledge of business management. Other challenges included poor provision of enabling infrastructure such as water, electricity, high cost of licensing, high taxation leading to poor turnover, poor patronage by consumers and users of service and competitiveness of the business

Discussion

The findings of the study showed that graduates run small scale businesses which included Keke NAPEP/ taxi transport services, dress making, book writing, marketing of food supplements and book binding. Others engaged in computer business services repair of automobiles / electrical items, public entertaining, laundry, sales of fairly used clothes, furniture making, carpentry, welding, and others, private school proprietorship, production of soaps, creams, detergents and other chemicals, preparation of cakes, ice creams and other food products, poultry, piggery and other forms of animal production and sale of food in restaurants. Yet others were engaged in cultivation of crops, barbing/ hair dressing salon, photography and repair of cell phones. The number of the investigated graduates who engaged in each job showed highest concentration on keke transport services. When motor cycles popularly known as Okada were allowed in the Owerri Municipality, it was also found by Ozonze (2004) that majority of the Okada transporters were graduates . Some of the businesses are really small scale which may not require so much capital to set up. However, most of the other jobs were fairly skilled and had the capacity to encourage their proprietors to settle and develop them into large scales. Junas (2013), similarly found out that school leavers take up any available job or trade but especially less skilled ones while searching for jobs.

The findings also showed that the factors which motivated the self employment desire of graduates were that some people who had succeeded in self employment encouraged them to do so. Some of them were formerly skilled before

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pursuing higher studies and some had such business already in their family. Some perceived that the business environment was favourable while some were only waiting for other job opportunities. These findings were expected because most times the stories of successful business enterprisers could motivate others especially ambitious young ones to undertake private and self employments. Timus (2012) reported in addition that some businesses now run in family lines particularly when the parents had succeeded and enjoyed prestige and a considerably good measure of economic and social advantages.

The findings showed that majority (60.8%) of the investigated group of graduates were engaged in self employments that were not related to the courses they studied. The findings also showed that 33% were engaged in self employments that were partly related to the courses they studied in the tertiary schools. Only 6.2% were on self employment that actually derived from the courses they graduated in. These findings are very disturbing because of the enormous challenges which would be experienced by those whose courses of study and the businesses they run are not related. Again, the social implication could be that such graduates may be viewed by the public as having wasted time and resources studying an irrelevant course. It may even be seen as indictment to the tertiary schools. That was how Ozonze (2004) concluded.

The findings that the challenges faced by self employed graduates included poor start up capital, indecision as to whether to remain on self employment or seek other employments, low morale due to discouragement from other people and lack of sufficient knowledge of business management. Other challenges included poor provision of enabling infrastructure such as water, electricity, high cost of licensing, high taxation leading to poor turnover, poor patronage by consumers and users of service and competitiveness of the business. These findings are real and expected in a poor economy where social and infrastructural developments are weak and slow and where there is a lot of struggling for survival. Junas (2013) posited that there is need to develop and encourage young business enterprisers as a result of latent problems and discouragements associated with initial business ventures.

Implications for Entrepreneurial Education

The findings of the study have serious implications for Entrepreneurial Education at the tertiary institutions. Majority of the investigated self employed graduates did not engage in jobs related directly to the courses they had studied at school. This could mean that the courses they had studied did not contain or afford them with training in entrepreneurship. Secondly, it could also mean that Entrepreneurial Education offered in some departments was not sufficient whether in content or in method to equip the graduates with knowledge, skills and competencies for self employment.

Recommendations

On the basis of the findings from the study, recommendations were made. They include the following:

1. Entrepreneurial Education offered at the tertiary institutions should be taken more seriously. It should be designed to equip the graduates with enough training for self employment. It is disturbing that the self employed graduates did not have much knowledge of business management.
2. Every discipline in the tertiary schools should in itself provide the students training for self employment. It is disturbing that majority of the self employed graduates did not engage in jobs related to the courses they had read at school.
3. The governments should build the capacity for the self employment of graduates by granting credit facilities and soft loans to them. In the same vein, the self employed graduates should enjoy facilitated registration and licensing processes. The enabling factors for self employments such as good roads and adequate supply of water, electricity and security should also be given attention by the government.
4. The governments should make legislations so as to protect the business of self employed graduates by removing unnecessary taxes on their products or services and competition against already established products and services.
5. The governments and media houses should collaborate to educate the public on the social and economic advantages of self employment of school leavers. This could help to build the morale of graduates for self employment and to reduce discouragement from other people. The stories of those who had made success in self employment should be discussed more often.

Summary and Conclusion

The study investigated the types of self employments undertaken by graduates as well as their motivations and challenges in Owerri Municipal Council of Imo State. The finding from the study would be relevant for the encouragement of self employment of school leavers and for improvement of career counselling in the tertiary schools in Nigeria. It was guided by four research questions.

The sample for the investigation comprised one hundred and seventy six self employed graduates from universities, polytechnics and colleges of education. The instrument used for data collection was a researchers' constructed structured questionnaire. The questionnaire had a response pattern of the modified four point Likert scale with an expected mean of 2.5. Data were analyzed using mean statistic. The findings showed that majority of the graduates were not self employed in the disciplines they studied. Findings also showed that most of the self employed graduates were running small scale businesses as they pursued other employment opportunities. The findings also showed that the self employed graduates face many challenges and that they need capacity building. The researchers recommended that government and

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other employment agencies should provide capacity building programmes for self employed graduate enterprisers. These could be by means of enriching the contents and methods of Entrepreneurial Education offered at the tertiary institutions. It was also recommended that every discipline in the tertiary schools should in itself provide the students training for self employment. The governments should build the capacity for the self employment of graduates by granting them credit facilities, soft loans and facilitated registration and licensing processes. The government should strive to protect the business of self employed graduates by removing unnecessary taxes on their products or services and competition against already established products and services. The enabling factors for self employments such as good roads and adequate supply of water, electricity and security should also be given attention by the government. There is need to educate the public on the advantages of self employment of school leavers.

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