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A SPECIAL EDITION OF NSS JOURNAL ON: THE NIGER DELTA

NIGERIAN SOCIOLOGICAL REVIEW

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FROM THE EDITORIAL BOARD

We are quite glad to publish a special edition of our Journal arising from the 7th Annual Conference of the Nigerian Sociological Society titled: "The Niger Delta Crises and the Most Probable Hypothesis" which was held in Sharon Ultimate Hotel, Abuja on November 27 and 28, 2007. It was a unique assemblage of Social Science Scholars from across the length and breadth of Nigeria with Prof. U. A. Igun, former Vice-Chancellor of Delta State University, Abraka taking the first shot at the underlying issues of the Niger-Delta. Prof. E. A. Alemika of the University of Jos situated the Niger-Delta crises within the ambit of the nation, and thus, canvassing for a collaborative effort in order to achieve the desired result of peace and development of the region.

Several other papers examined the Niger-Delta crises from a variety of specialist perspectives. The consensus in all the papers appeared to be an earnest desire for peace and an enduring framework for sustainable development in the Niger-Delta. This volume is rather encompassing and one of the most authoritative source materials on the unfolding crises of the Niger-Delta.

We wholeheartedly recommend this edition of the Nigerian Sociological Society Journal to policy makers, academics in the Social Sciences and Arts, NGOs, Graduate Students, Politicians and Peace Builders. It is also a suitable text for students in General Studies, Conflict Resolution Studies and Peace Management in the Nigerian Tertiary Institutions.

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ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION: A PANACEA FOR POVERTY REDUCTION AMONG THE YOUTH OF THE NIGER DELTA

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Introduction

Predominantly, the people of the Niger Delta are highly dependent on the environment as a major source of livelihood. They make their living from the exploitation of the resources of their land, water and forest as farmers, hunters and fishermen. Khan (2001) identified these resources as (i) human assets e.g. capacity for basic labour, good health and skills); ii) natural assets (eg land); iii) physical assets e.g. physical capital and access to infrastructure) iv) financial assets eg savings and access to credits; (v) social assets eg informal or formal social security and political power). Unfortunately, the search for oil and economic activities by the multinationals in the Niger Delta, disrupted their lives and environment resulting in abject poverty of the people. Poverty incidence in the Niger Delta which relates to deprivation has been recorded to affect the youths more than for other groups. The youths are usually used as the perpetuators, agents, and instrumentalities of the Niger Delta crisis. As agents and principal organizers of violence, their education, health, life and future career have been mortgaged in exchange for the dividends of violence which comes in terms of cash, material things, and other forms of pleasure. Majority of them have abandoned their education and occupation to join one militia group or the other.

It was based on this that the researcher decided to carry out this study to examine the importance of entrepreneurship education on curbing poverty and resolving crisis among the Niger Delta youths. To achieve this objective, the following research questions are posed; is there any relationship between entrepreneurship education and poverty reduction? Can the introduction of Entrepreneurial Development Studies (EDS) to youth early in their lives help in reducing poverty among them? Can entrepreneurial education help youth to develop self confidence? Can introduction of EDS help in curbing the crisis in the Niger Delta? To provide answers to these questions, two hypotheses are postulated. The paper is divided into five sections. The introduction, literature review, the methodology and theoretical framework, the data analysis and conclusion and recommendations.

Literature Review

Poverty Defined

Poverty can be defined in terms of the availability of shelter, food and clothing to the masses. Galbraith (1955) saw the poor as those who have limited and insufficient food, poor clothing, live in crowded areas ... and dirty shelter, cannot afford medical care, education and recreation; cannot meet family and community obligations and other necessities of life. And people are "poverty stricken when they, fall markedly behind the average income obtainable in their immediate community. Poverty can also be viewed from the perspective of both deprivation of disposable income and low standard of living. According to Ray (1998) "poverty is the inability of an individual, group, or nation to provide shelter, nutrition, and other material goods that enable people to live a good life." UNIDO (2003) opined that "the poor are those who cannot afford decent food, medical care, recreation, decent shelter and clothes; meet family and community obligations and other necessities of life".

The Concept of Poverty

Poverty is therefore a relative term. The concept of poverty includes material deprivation, (i.e food, shelter) and access to services (i.e. Health, education). It also tends to encompass a range of non material conditions such as a lack of rights, insecurity, powerlessness and indignity (Vandenberg, 2006). The focus of the concept and perspective upon which poverty is based determines its definition. However, irrespective of the concept of poverty, poverty in most cases is deeper in meaning than whatever definition one adopts. As was noted in the *Journal of Poverty*, poverty means "more than being impoverished and more than lacking financial means".

Poverty in the Niger Delta

Statistically, Niger Delta which is made up of nine States (namely; Bayelsa, Rivers, Cross River, Edo, Delta, Ondo, Akwa Ibom, Abia, and Imo) is more than 25% of the Nigerian population. Economically, the Niger Delta produces more than 90% of the Nigerian Gross National Income. Nigeria major source of revenue comes from oil and this has continued to be on an upward increase due to the rise in prices of crude oil in the international market. The Niger Delta is the goose that lays the golden egg for Nigeria (Agbo, 2007) but unfortunately, this has not been reflected in their environment. Why? Niger Delta populace has continued to suffer the negative impacts of the oil which include violence, climate change and environmental degradation on a large scale.

Among these problems Agbola and Olurin (2003); Schoof (2006) viewed environmental degradation which is usually caused by costal erosion, floods, changes in the rainfall pattern, changes in vegetation, acid rain, gas flaring, oil spill, pipeline vandalization and communal conflicts as the major problem facing the Niger Delta. The consequence of all these

problems is poverty. As the World Bank (2000) reported, despite the vast oil resources in the Niger Delta, the region remains poor. Poverty is therefore the after effect of all the problems of the Niger Delta whether violence, environmental degradation, communal clashes, the activities of the militants groups, closure of an oil well or withdrawal of the expatriates from the Niger Delta region.

Entrepreneurial Education

Entrepreneurship is the force for economic growth (Schumpeter, 1934) while entrepreneurs are the drivers of the force (Williams, 2004). Entrepreneurship has been recognized for its potential for wealth creation, poverty alleviation and unemployment reduction (Dana, 2001; Nicholas, 2001). Entrepreneurial education is therefore designed to communicate the skills needed to recognize business opportunity, organize and start new business venture and it tries to provide knowledge and hands-on learning experiences that will help youth develop the skills associated with starting a business venture (Brown, 2000).

Entrepreneurial Education Curriculum

The major rationale behind entrepreneurial education is the inherent assumption that entrepreneurship characteristics and skills can be developed. It provides insight on how to initiate a successful entrepreneurial syllabus. According to Williams (2004) sound entrepreneurial education curriculum is one that contains information that will help students to:

- recognize business opportunities in their immediate environment and write business plan that will enable them address such opportunity;
- source the necessary resources required to take advantage of the identity market opportunity. This requires both conceptualization skills and marketing abilities.
- establish organization and enterprise that will be involved in the production, marketing and distribution of product and service that addresses the marketing opportunity.

Developing and designing entrepreneurial education curriculum requires more than theoretical ability. Entrepreneurial curriculum is different from other business courses curricula because it is provided within the existing system that provides a decentralized, individualized and empowering environment in which students can learn or develop the skills needed for entrepreneurship (Williams, 2004). It involves careful assessment of individual student's ability in terms of idea generation, analyzing of such idea and designing programs that will enable students pursue such idea into a profitable venture.

Entrepreneurial education prepares students for engaging in a self-directed economic future;

hence George, Jain and Maltarich (2005) suggested industry leaders or entrepreneurial professors as the preferred path for developing entrepreneurial curriculum.

Theoretical Framework and Methodology

Maslow Hierarchy of Needs

Using Maslow's hierarchy of needs, at a particular point in time, the deprivation of any of those needs in a man will be regarded as a state of poverty. Hence Chambers (1995) described the hierarchy of need among the poor in terms of basic survival, security, autonomy and self-respect. The inability to meet these needs represent a state of poverty in a man. Relating Maslow's theory of need to poverty will help us to see poverty a process that defers from stage to stage and from level to level. And as a process, it is viewed from the cause and mechanism of the generation and transmission. It can be transferred from one generation to another. In support of this, Sen (1982) opined that poverty is the lack of certain capabilities such as being able to participate with dignity in society.

Research Design

This study is focused on examining the relationship between entrepreneurship education (EE) and poverty reduction (PR) among the youths of the Niger Delta. The instrument of questionnaire was designed for this study and was administered to the students of a particular University in a Southern State, Nigeria.

Measurement of Variables

The students were made to provide information as per their demographic variables and other data which include; age, sex, faculty and programme. My curiosity to measure the respondents' opinion on entrepreneurship education as a panacea for poverty reduction among the Niger delta led us to design the questionnaire with questions relate to entrepreneurship. A check for the validity and reliability of the questionnaires were carried out. The questionnaire has two sections with twenty five items. The students were made to indicate the degree of their agreement with the statements on the questionnaire about themselves. They were required to select from a five-point Likert scale which include a category of strongly agree = 5, agree = 4, undecided = 3, disagree = 2 and strongly disagree=1. Different literatures provided us with the opportunity to draw up the meaning of poverty, entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship education.

Structured questions help the study to ask the students to select either yes or no options on questions relating to entrepreneurship education. Open ended questions were also asked question to find out their opinion on the entrepreneurial activities. Fifteen items relating to aspects which include importance to entrepreneurship, how entrepreneurship can be used to solve the problem of poverty and the benefits of entrepreneurship education. To test the

hypothesis, which states negative relationship exists between the dependent and independent variables, regression analysis model was employed. The independent variable for the correlation model is entrepreneurship development studies (EDS) while dependent variables include reduction of poverty among youths and building of their self confidence against economic recession. The respondents were allowed to tick the options in line with their choice of answer.

The sample

The sample for this research was drawn from students of a particular University in the Southern part of Nigeria, where entrepreneurial programme has been designed to be taught to students for a minimum of eight (8) semesters. The data was obtained from the questionnaire distributed to the students of the same University. The students' class representatives were used in administrating the questionnaire. The questionnaires were randomly distributed at the end of a general class. A total number of 220 questionnaires were distributed and 190 or 86.36% was retrieved from the respondents.

Data Collection and Variables

The questionnaires for the study were distributed to the final year students at their point of graduation. The variables used for this study are (i) variables relating to their demography (ii) some entrepreneurial variables were identified that could influence students choice on poverty reduction strategies. On the other hand, students' opinions were sought on the characteristics of youth entrepreneurs and how entrepreneurship can help in curbing the Niger Delta crisis. Several variables though not totally exhausted have been identified to include risk taking, innovation, responsibility, desire for independence, creativity, parental occupation, passion for business and others.

Data Analysis

Survey Results

The results of the analysis of the data which include the demographic characteristics of the students and the hypotheses are explored and showed below.

Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Table 1 shows that out of the 191 of sample size of the respondents, 61 or 31.9% are male while 128 or 67% of the respondents are female. In terms of their age, 30 of them belong to the age range of 16 - 19 years, 137 of them are in the age range of 20 -23 years, 22 of them are in the age range of 24 - 27 years, while only 2 of them belong to the age range of 28 years and above. In terms of the respondents' enrolment status, the table revealed that they were drawn from the three colleges of the University (College of Business and Social Sciences, Human

Development and Science and Technology). 122 or 63.93% of them are from the college of the business and social sciences, 33 or 17.3% of them were from college of human development while of 34 or 17.8% of them were from college of science and technology.

Also Table 1 revealed that 175 or 91.6% of the respondents agreed that they have been exposed to Entrepreneurial Development Studies (EDS) while 14 or 7.3% of the respondents disagreed with the fact. Also 167 or 87.4% of the respondents agreed that they have a business dream, while 19 or 9.9% of them do not have. On the question whether EDS should be made a compulsory subject for students in primary and secondary schools, 173 or 90.6% of the respondents answered Yes, while 16 or 8.4% of them answered No. Also 186 or 97.38% of the respondents agreed that EDS should be introduced to youth early in life while only 1 or .5% of them disagreed with the question.

Table 1: Respondents' Demographic Characteristics

Variable	Items	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	61	31.9
	Female	128	67.0
Age of the Respondents	16-19	30	15.7
	20-23	137	71.7
	24-27	22	11.5
	28-above 30	2	1.0
Faculty of the Students	CBS	122	63.9
	CHD	33	17.3
	CST	122	63.9
Exposure to EDS	Yes	175	91.6
	No	14	7.3
Have Business Dream	Yes	167	87.4
	No	19	9.9
EDS Should be Made a Compulsory	Yes	173	90.6
Course to Primary and Sec. School Student	No	16	8.4
EDS should be introduced to Youths	Strongly agree	46	73.3
Early in Life	Agree	140	24.1
	Undecided	1	.5
	Disagree	1	.5
	Strongly Disagree	-	-

Source: Field Survey, 2007

Hypotheses

H0 1: Introduction of EDS to youth early in life will not result to poverty reduction

H0 2: EDS will not help youth to develop self confidence against economic recession

To analyze these hypotheses, the model of regression is employed.

Regression Analysis

In testing the hypotheses, two variables (dependent and independent) were identified. The dependent variables include poverty reduction and building of self confidence against economic recession while independent variable is Introduction of EDS to youths.

Table 4: Coefficients

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
Model	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	2.957	.433		4.749	.000
EDS & poverty reduction among Youths	.268	.059	.318	4.582	.000
EDS & confidence building against economic Recession	-8.902E-02	.041	-.148	-2.156	.032

Source: Source: Field Survey, 2007

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Dubin-Watson
1	.584	.341	.331	.3839	1.927

b. Predictor: (Constant); EDS be introduced to youths early in life

A Dependent Variable: EDS helps in building confidence against economic recession. EDS can help in reducing poverty among Nigerian youths; EDS can help government in curbing crisis among the youths

Results

$$IEDSE = f(RPATY + B1BCAER)$$

Where: IEDSE= introduction of entrepreneurial development studies to youth early in life, RPATY = reduction in poverty among the youth, and building confidence against economic recession. The result of regression analysis model in Table 4 shows that the chosen independent variable was significant in explaining the changes in the dependent variables. While RPATY is significant at 1%, BCAER is significant at 5%. This implies that the level of changes in RPATY and BCAER with regards to their estimates, the results equally show that a unit change in IEDSE will affect the level of RPATY and BCAER with .268, .353 and

-8.902E-02 respectively. The overall performance of the variables in terms of R^2 appears high and the F-value, which is significant at one percent connotes that the model is neither mis-specified nor biased.

Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendations

Discussion

Entrepreneurship education has been looked at from the perspective of its importance for poverty reduction among the youth and building of youth confidence against economic recession. To identify the importance of entrepreneurship education, an open ended questionnaire was designed to seek the opinion of the respondents (students of the University under study). The questions were based on the study of Gorman, et al (1997); Brown (2000) and Chigunta (2002) on the importance of entrepreneurial education. The respondents gave several points as regards to the importance of entrepreneurial education to youths; the entrepreneurial characteristics possessed by youths and ways they think entrepreneurship education can help to reduce poverty among youths. The results obtained in table 4, shows that the dependent variables viz reducing poverty among the youths and building of self confidence have positive relationship with the independent variable (introduction of EDS to youth early in life). The two variables were regressed and the result of the regression analysis shows strong significant values of 0.00 and 0.032 for hypotheses one and two. The result of this study supported the findings of Ahwireng-Obeng and Ncube (2005) which suggested that exposing youths to EDS early in life will help to equip them with the knowledge and skills required running of entrepreneurial activities.

Conclusion and recommendations

Entrepreneurship has been recognized for its potential for wealth creation, poverty alleviation and unemployment reduction. It also has the tendency of resulting sanity and peace required for poverty reduction. Equipping the students with entrepreneurial skills has the tendency of inculcating in them the business knowledge and skills that will enable them to be creative, innovative and self reliant before and after graduation. Based on the results of this study, I hereby recommend that EDS should be introduced to youths early in their primary, secondary and tertiary schools so as to reduce the incidences of risk behaviour that is always resulting in communal clashes, conflicts and the more recent cases of kidnapping of innocent people that is very pampant in the Niger Delta, Nigeria. The designing of EDS curriculum should also be done by someone who has theoretical skills, conceptual skills and the practical ability on entrepreneurship. This will help to ensure that the entrepreneurial programme covers all the topics that will help the youths develop entrepreneurial skills.

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