

Employability and entrepreneurship skills training programme for final year undergraduate students in Nigeria

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Abstract

The main aims of the present project are develop a training programme to enhance employability and entrepreneurship skills to final year students; promote entrepreneurial culture, self-employment, and economic independence; and capacity building among staff at the University of Ibadan. Twenty final year students participated in the training for 8 days spread over a 10 week period. Results showed that all the participants reported their experience on the program as highly rewarding. They also reported having acquired numerous skills in the course of this intervention, including: entrepreneurial ability, communication skills, assertiveness, networking, listening ability, conflict resolution and self analysis and development.

1. Background

Nigeria is located in West Africa, bordered by Benin to the west, Niger to the north and Cameroon to the east. Nigeria has a population of about 152 million in 2010 – comprising nearly one-quarter of sub-Sahara Africa’s population (Central Intelligence Agency, 2010). Nigeria’s population is projected to reach 356 million by 2050. in addition to her huge population, Nigeria is endowed with diverse agricultural, mineral, marine and forest resources. Infact, Nigeria has the largest oil and gas reserves in all of Africa (Adeyemo et al., 2010). However, these resources have not been effectively utilized to yield maximum economic benefits. Furthermore, the years of civil war and military rule, and entrenched corruption have hindered economic growth of the country.

Nigeria has more than 60 universities which boast an educated labour force (Central Intelligence Agency, 2010). According to various independent studies, over 70% of graduates from Nigerian universities and tertiary institutions have difficulty in getting jobs. In 2001, the unemployment rate for Nigerian university graduates was recorded to be 22%; this rate has been increasing since then. This high rate was not as the result of no jobs, but the result of lack of people who have the skills that employers are looking for.

Nigeria has a large domestic market that could serve as a springboard for joining export markets. These and other national assets could give development opportunities that come with the globalization of industry, trade and investment. By equipping students with generic and subject-specific employability and entrepreneurship skills, these opportunities could lead to job creation and reduction in poverty.

In summary, Nigerian students need to be equipped with transferable, practical and employability skills to give them applied knowledge and flexibility to meet the needs of local, regional and national labour market. These needs can be uncovered by establishing a strong network between the university and industry. The Nigerian students also need to develop entrepreneurship spirit, skills, and mindset to enable them to establish new business ventures by using the diverse and abundant resources in Nigeria. The creation of new knowledge-based enterprises will help Nigeria achieve and maintain competitiveness in a globalising world, and to address social and environmental issues effectively.

1.2. Project Aims

The main aims of the present project are:

- Develop a training programme to enhance employability and entrepreneurship skills to final year students
- Promote entrepreneurial culture, self-employment, and economic independence

○ Capacity building among staff at the University of Ibadan

This is a joint project between University of Ibadan, Nigeria and Roehampton University, UK. The University of Ibadan is the oldest university in Nigeria, being founded in 1948 as a College of the University of London. It became an independent university in 1962, and since then has a rich academic linkage with numerous American, European and other African universities. It has also been involved in staff capacity building in specific skills and has organized several workshops on “entrepreneurship” and “university-private sector collaboration”.

Roehampton University is one of the newest universities in the UK, having been established in 2004. At the same time, through its 4 Colleges, it has history dating back to the 1840s. Roehampton has extensive experience in employability and entrepreneurship skills training, international project management, and other capacity building projects - worldwide.

1.3. Theoretical background

The theoretical framework of our research is based on Mitra and Abubakar’s model of entrepreneurship education. According to this model, knowledge creation for entrepreneurship is based on human capital development (Figure 1). Human capital, in turn, plays a key role in forming a labour market and in the development of an economy (Acs, 2008). As reported by some authors, higher level of human capital is with higher return for both the firm in terms of productivity, and for the individual in terms of high wages (Acs, 2008). Human capital also plays a key role in promoting new firm formation and the innovative growth of firms in a region. The formation of human capital in this context is a function of both formal skills development and experiential forms of learning by doing.

With funding from the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (under Education Partnerships in Africa), an “An Employability and entrepreneurship skills training programme for students at the University of Ibadan” was developed. The programme consists of eight sections with each section covering various aspects of employability and entrepreneurship skills:

1. Introduction (getting started; employability issues)
2. Creativity, entrepreneurial spirit and self actualization - Personal development (e.g., self awareness & self esteem; interpersonal skills; leadership and self management skills; organizational behavior; job analysis)
3. Exploring concepts of entrepreneurship
4. Innovating & Business development
5. The Nigerian entrepreneur
6. Skills enhancement (e.g., networking; branding)
7. Practical sessions (e.g., CV writing, business plan, pitching)
8. Entrepreneur panel (e.g., presenting group business plan)

For this pilot study (called the “experimental group”), 20 final year students in Guidance and Counseling, and in Human Nutrition participated in the training. Training consisted of eight 5 to 6 hours of lectures and tutorials or group/work-out sessions per day (Saturdays) for 8 days spread over a 10 week period. They received a certificate of full participation in the study as well as all the training resources and final feedback shortly before departure from the University for the Youth Corps exercise.

Results showed that all of the 20 participants reported their experience on the program as highly rewarding. About half (55%) of student reported all aspects of the program as equally enlightening and highly beneficial, 15% identified creativity, 15% networking, 10% resume writing and 5% conflict resolution as the most rewarding sessions in the program. All the

students reported having acquired numerous skills in the course of this intervention, including: entrepreneurial ability, communication skills, assertiveness, networking, listening ability, conflict resolution and self analysis and development.

All the 19 NYSC eligible candidates reported they would approach their deployment enthusiastically.

Two control groups of students were also developed. The first group “internal controls” was made up of the remaining half of the final year students in Guidance and Counselling and Human Nutrition. The second group “external controls” was made up of all the final year students in Human Physiology and Biochemistry. These 2 control groups have been engaged as two independent study groups for the purpose of their blinding to the fact that they are really control groups for the actual group of the study students. The first (“internal”) control group are called the NYSC experience study group while the second (“external”) control group is called the national brain drain study group. Only the experimental group post training questionnaire analysis result is reported in this paper.

Table 1: Learning content of the 3 groups

The Roehampton-Ibadan Employability and Entrepreneurship Skills Training Programme	Internal control group: “NYSC Field Experience Group of Students”	External control: “Brain Drain Study Group”
24 final year students in Guidance & Counseling, and in Human Nutrition.	20 students in Guidance & Counseling, and in Human Nutrition.	38 final year students in Biochemistry and Human Physiology.
Received eight 5-6 hours of lectures or group sessions per day (Saturdays) for 8 days spread over a 10 week period.	Had 2 two hours sessions.	Had 2 two hour sessions.
Creativity, innovation, networking, interview skills, preparing CV for job interviews, development of business plan, resource location and management, financial accounting, and the entrepreneurial spirit.	Positive living, being part of those to help naturally to solve Nigeria’s many developmental problems, networking for solving any encountered NYSC problems.	Positive living, positively resist and overcome the factors that undermine Nigeria’s nationhood (e.g., corruption), networking for problem solving.

Table 2: Sociodemographic characteristics of the 3 groups

	Training group	“NYSC Field Experience Group of Students”	“Brain Drain Study Group”
Gender			
- Male	10 (50%)	11 (50%)	21 (72.5%)
- Female	10 (50%)	11 (50%)	11 (27.5%)
Age: Mean (SD)	25 years (SD=3)	26.3 (SD=3)	24.3 (SD=2)
Father’s highest academic attainment			
- No formal education	3 (15%)	4 (18.2%)	5 (12.5%)
- Primary education	3 (15%)	3 (13.6%)	5 (12.5%)
- Secondary education	7 (35%)	4 (18.2%)	10 (25.0%)
- Tertiary education	7 (35%)	11 (50.0%)	20 (50.0%)
Mother’s highest academic attainment			
- No formal education	4 (20%)	4 (18.1%)	6 (15%)
- Primary education	4 (20%)	5 (22.7%)	4 (10%)
- Secondary education	7 (35%)	5 (22.7%)	9 (22.5%)
- Tertiary education	5 (25%)	8 (36.3%)	21 (52.5%)

Discussions are currently underway with various private enterprises (e.g., Manufacturers’ Association of Nigeria, Oyo State Branch, Oyo State/Ibadan Chambers of Commerce, National Directorate of Employment) to seek ways of job placement for these students post-graduation.

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Figure 1: Model of employability and entrepreneurship education
(source: Mitra & Abubakar, 2011)



