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**STATE POLICY FRAMEWORK AND ENTREPRENEURIAL OUTCOME IN SIERRA  
LEONE**

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Abstract			
<p>The outcome of youth entrepreneurship in developing economies is impacted by something much more acute than the lack of entrepreneurial competence and finance: The legitimacy of the state policy framework and its compatibility with the entrepreneur's expectations. This study investigates youth entrepreneur's legitimacy judgments about the current state policy framework in Sierra Leone.</p> <p>The purpose of this study is to understand the legitimacy of the state policy framework and its implication on youth entrepreneurship through an empirical study; and to propose an adapted framework of the linkage between state policy, legitimacy, and entrepreneurial outcome.</p> <p>The study adopts a qualitative approach in evaluating the congruence between the state policy and entrepreneurial outlook in Sierra Leone. Data were obtained through extensive interviews with participants from three groups: The Ministry of Youth Affairs and its Commission, Sierra Leone Opportunity for Business Operation, and devoted youth entrepreneurs. The data were coded manually and analyzed using the Gioia method to complement a comprehensive literature review of entrepreneurship and legitimacy.</p> <p>The findings of this study show that youth entrepreneurs perceived the current state policy as non-legitimate, due to lack of awareness about the functions of various policy organizations, political commitments to specific communities, and limited access to existing entrepreneurial resources. However, it also provides suggestions on how to ensure that policy actions and activities are legitimate and compatible with the entrepreneur's expectations. The country already has a suitable policy framework designed to support the actions and activities of the Ministry of Youth Affairs and its Commission that must be compatible with the entrepreneur's expectations. There are also extensive entrepreneurial resources that must be easily attainable and accessible to all youth entrepreneurs. Sierra Leone also needs a policy that affects the entrepreneur's attitude towards policymakers to reduce the stigma of apprehensive youth attitude.</p> <p>The result of this study provides a suitable angle to evaluate entrepreneurship and identify other factors that strengthen the effectiveness of entrepreneurship research in developing economies.</p>			
Keywords Sierra Leone; Youth entrepreneurship; Legitimacy; Entrepreneurial outcome			
Additional information			

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## **1 INTRODUCTION**

This section provides an overview of the research theme and highlights the research gap and the research question. It also demonstrates the significance of this research study, the research approach and provides detail structural preview.

### **1.1 Background of the study**

Today, the ability to encourage young people in entrepreneurship is a growing challenge for developing economies. While in practice, young people are eager to embark on entrepreneurship activities, the legitimacy of state policy actions and activities in terms of meeting the needs and expectations of young people is lacking. For instance, in Sierra Leone, until recently, entrepreneurial activities (i.e., the micro, small and medium enterprises) were virtually neglected in the country Economic Development Strategy. Therefore, the focus of this research is to study the extent to which the Sierra Leone government uses state policy programs to encourage young people in entrepreneurship across the country.

The main theoretical framework of this study focusses on O'Donovan (2002) theory of legitimacy and adopt Stillman (1974) definition of legitimacy. Hall and Sobel (2006) entrepreneurial outcome process will be used as a tool to structure the narrative of this study. The goal of this study to understand whether state policy programs in Sierra Leone meet entrepreneur's expectations.

Extensive range of studies (see, e.g., Carland and Carland, 2004; Wennekers and Thurik, 1999; Wong et al., 2005) has been carried out by scholars and researchers, as well as states and organizations on the importance of developing youth entrepreneurship programs to boost economic competitiveness at all levels. Perhaps because young people are more likely to prefer self-employment than adults; thus, they represent an essential module in addressing unemployment. For instance, a recent report by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) indicates that 45% of youth prefer self-employment to employment, compared to adults 37%. Furthermore, 41% of youth think that they could be self-employed within the next

five years compared to 30% of adults who believe that it is feasible (OECD, 2014.) Meanwhile, in Africa, the entrepreneurial mindset is gradually growing.

In Sub Saharan Africa and beyond, a recent report by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) identifies four key areas to boost the potentials of Africa's youth entrepreneurs: education and training, business support and advice, as well as business capital and financial support, and ICT and technology (IDRC, 2015). These four key areas highlight the importance of policy framework towards entrepreneurial growth. For instance, in Sierra Leone, the government has proposed various initiatives to boost youth participation in entrepreneurship.

The National Youth Commission (NAYCOM) and its policy established in 2009 presented a wide range of sub-regional initiatives to empower youth to develop their potential, creativity, and skills for national development. The principal objective of NAYCOM is to institutionalize the involvement of youth at all levels of the decision-making process (from central to decentralized level), to ensure swift nurturing of democratic and productive culture. While at the same time, empower and actively engage young people in a variety of productive activities to develop their utmost potential that enhances innovation and youth talent across the country (NAYCOM, 2014, p.12.)

Historically, states and organizational policies have experienced remote success to integrate and nourish youth entrepreneurship programs, because, today, most states and organizations are trying to play a balancing role between encouraging youth entrepreneurship and swiftly stifling it by over regulations. Consequently, prompting young people to deal with annoying overheads and routines ranging from VAT returns to health and safety at work (Vinten and Alcock. 2004.) For instance, Baba (2013) found that high cost of doing business is one of the severe challenges that youth entrepreneurs face in Nigeria, as they must deal with varying overheads to provide necessary infrastructure and at the same time, bribe officials.

Similarly, one of the core challenges facing entrepreneurs in France is embedding in the height of taxes and the complexity of the tax system in the country. It thus, hin-

ders entrepreneurship, as, high tax rates harm the incomes of small businesses, while at the same time, complex tax systems discourage entrepreneurs from engaging in primary entrepreneurial activities (Henriquez, Verheul, Knaap and Bischoff, 2001.)

Nonetheless, due to today's increasing global business uncertainty caused by the recession-hit 1990s wherein, Small and Medium-Size Enterprises (SMEs) struggled with deficit and access to credit and loan, entrepreneurship has become conventional wisdom across various economies (Sharples, 2011; Vinten and Alcock, 2004). For instance, in Finland, the success of the Angry Birds franchise swiftly reflects a steady growth of youth entrepreneurship in the country. Finland is currently shifting its focus from a predominant innovation and commercial & legal infrastructural (ICLI) mindset to an international entrepreneurial (IE) mindset (Suomalainen, Stenholm, Kovalainen, Heinonen and Pukkinen, 2015). Similarly, the government of Malaysia continues to implement a wide range of measures (such as conducive economic environment, tax incentives, various financing, and funding schemes, as well as business advisory centers) to strengthen entrepreneurial mindset across the country (Ariff and Abubakar, 2003.) Given that Hall and Sobel (2006) entrepreneurial outcome process will be used as a tool to structure the narrative of this study, the research gap and research question are discussed in a clear and comprehensive manner in order to illustrate the scientific significance of this study.

## **1.2 Research gap and research question**

Earlier research has shown that entrepreneurship is a widely recognized and relevant field of study. Perhaps, it is because entrepreneurship activities continue to become an accessible career path in developing and developed economies (Gutterman, 2015). Osunde (2014) found that entrepreneurship and its development in Nigeria is at the all-time peak of awareness creation and participation. His findings led him to urge that if the Nigeria government increase its support and ability to explore a new area of competition among other, the nation will stand a better chance of improving its pace of economic development and fast growth. Conversely, Tsoka and Botha (2015) found that young people in Sub Saharan Africa do not start a business out of necessity, and thus, emphasize that role model plays a crucial role in influencing youth in

entrepreneurship. Other studies (see, e.g., Chinguta et al., 2005; Gobbi, 2014; and Sitoula, 2015) have all swiftly looked at young people participation in entrepreneurship, its challenges, as well as success factors of youth entrepreneurship in developing countries. Sitoula (2015) found that young people in Kathmandu are eager to pursue a career in entrepreneurship but contend that youth entrepreneurship development is lacking in the community. He maintained that unemployment among young people would likely fall if youth entrepreneurship is encouraged.

Given that previous research has touched upon and recognized entrepreneurship as the principal mechanism for states and local communities – to building prosperity and stimulate growth, there are limited studies that focused solely on whether there are state policy programs in place to support, nurture, and encourage youth entrepreneurship. Consequently, scholars have stressed the importance of legitimacy in improving the effectiveness of both state policy and entrepreneurship (Arshed, Cartel and Mason, 2014). For instance, Sitoula (2015) found that young people in Kathmandu are eager to pursue entrepreneurship, but the lack of entrepreneurial development programs is a significant concern. His research is of great interest, as I aim to evaluate whether the Sierra Leone government through its various ministries (such as the Ministry of Youth Affairs), is encouraging entrepreneurship among youth. My aim differs from that of Sitoula in that my focus is on the legitimacy of existing state policy and programs rather than the motivational aspects of youth entrepreneurs. As mentioned in the background of this study, the practical goal of this research is to understand whether existing state policy meets entrepreneur's expectations across the country. The purpose is to truly understand the legitimacy of the existing state policy framework and its implication on youth entrepreneurship growth.

Hence, the main research question in this study is:

***R. q: What are youth entrepreneur's legitimacy judgments about the entrepreneurial policy framework in Sierra Leone?***

In order to respond to the main research question, two sub-questions are warranted:



*S. q: 1. Are there any programs and projects in place to encourage youth entrepreneurship in Sierra Leone?*

*S. q: 2. If there are programs in place, how feasible and easily attainable are these programs and projects to young people in the country?*

By swiftly focusing on government policy that aims to support, nurture, and promote youth entrepreneurship, I will investigate whether the said perspective and initiatives aligned with the external literature on challenges facing young entrepreneurs in developing economies like Sierra Leone.

If the government programs are not feasible and easily attainable to young people in the country, then the issues youth entrepreneurs face in the country are severe and acute. In that case, any unanticipated findings that might imperil youth entrepreneurial growth in Sierra Leone will be evaluated comprehensively. Conversely, if the government policy frameworks are feasible and easily attainable to youth, this research will, nevertheless, assist young entrepreneurs to be aware of the various opportunities available, thus, provide clear linkage between state policy, legitimacy, and entrepreneurial outlook in the country. Furthermore, the findings will be valuable information for outside donor organizations that are contributing significantly to improve the standard of youth employment and community degradation in Sierra Leone.

For instance, this research could be useful for the European Union (EU) that has recently signed a €1.1 million, 30-months project with an international non-governmental organization GOAL to fight child labor, human trafficking and improve decent work in Sierra Leone (Milton, 2017). The significance of this research is discussed further below.

### **1.3 Research significance**

The motivation for doing this research stem from my curiosity to understand in detail who benefits from the state policy framework in Sierra Leone, as communities and

youth groups in the capital city of Freetown have limited access to training and development programs. This research is significant and worth studying because of core issues: the current state of entrepreneurship among young people in Sierra Leone; the global country outlook in terms of entrepreneurial growth, and the number of state resources allocated to key Ministries to improve quality education, advance the potential of young people across the country.

For instance, during Sierra Leone 2016 government budget allocation, over \$3 million was allocated to the Ministry of Youth, \$2,608 million allocated for on-going works at the National Youth Village, the Youth Farm, the National Youth Service Programme, the National Youth Development, and Empowerment Programme, and support to Youth in Fisheries Project, and \$456 thousand was allocated to support other youth-related activities. Also, over \$31 million was earmarked for the Ministry of Education, \$7 million allocated toward improving access to quality education, \$4 million allocated for secondary school, \$18 million allocated for tertiary education institutions, and \$3 million earmarked for technical and vocational institutions. Additionally, an extra \$358 thousand allocated to the Skills Development Fund to support the training of Sierra Leoneans in highly specialized skills, the young Engineers Corps and young professional internship programme (Marah, 2015.)

Given that the state resources allocated to relevant Ministries to improve education and innovation in Sierra Leone is higher than most economies within the Sub-Saharan Africa region, it is imperative to understand the current state of entrepreneurship in the country. The reason is that, with all these state policy resources allocations, the current state of entrepreneurship growth in the country is sluggish.

For instance, a survey by Sierra Leone Opportunities for Business Action (SOBA), indicate that 94% of entrepreneurs in Sierra Leone cannot afford to pay the business support service they need, whereas 51% of entrepreneurs seek business support from family or friends, and 14% strictly rely on themselves (SOBA, 2017.) Additionally, a report by the Global Entrepreneurship Index (GEI) ranked Sierra Leone 135th (of 137th countries) on the ease of entrepreneurial performance activities in the world, and 28th (of 30th countries) on comparator economies within the Sub Saharan Africa

region (Acs, Szerb and Lloyd, 2017). These core issues and challenges highlight the significance of this research, that is, to understand the legitimacy of the existing state policy framework in Sierra Leone and its implication on youth entrepreneurship growth.

#### **1.4 Research approach and research structure**

This research uses a qualitative study and adopts an abductive research approach. Ali and Birley (1998) define the term abductive approach as a “well-established role for existing theory - since it informs the development of hypotheses, the choice of variables, and the resultant measures which researchers intend to use.” Thus, help researchers to swiftly observe, identify, and find ideal phenomena of interest. By using an abductive approach, I hope to achieve the goal of this research and simultaneously answer the two sub-questions designed to respond to the main research question. In order to achieve these objectives, various literature reviews on entrepreneurship and legitimacy are carried out. As Jussila (2013) mentions, the aim of conducting literature views in academic research is to provide theoretical preunderstanding of the phenomenon to build research gap and ensure that interviews and empirical data analysis are well supported. Below is a breakdown of the research structure.

This study is divided into seven sections. Section 2 consist of the entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial outcome process. This section starts by providing definitions of entrepreneurship and discusses what constitutes entrepreneurship. The second and third parts of this section evaluate the entrepreneurial trend in Africa and Europe and highlight Hall and Sobel (2006) entrepreneurial outcome process. Section 3 consist of the conceptual framework. It begins by providing a comprehensive synthesis of the various definitions of legitimacy. It also evaluates state legitimacy and provides an insight into what threatens the legitimacy of state policy framework actions and activities. Section 4 swiftly look at Sierra Leone as a study area, youth entrepreneurship, and the current model of entrepreneurial growth in Sierra Leone. Section 5 provides a comprehensive explanation of the methodology and the use of a qualitative approach. It also evaluates and provides a detailed account of the data collection method, interview procedure, and the analysis process of this study. Section 6 pro-

vides a detailed report on the practical result in order to gain insight into youth entrepreneurial legitimacy judgment about the current entrepreneurial policy framework in Sierra Leone. Section 7 answer the research questions and draw theoretical implication based on these results.

## **2 ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND OUTCOME PROCESS**

This section provides an insight into what constitutes entrepreneurship. The reason for discussing this section is to highlight entrepreneurship as a source of opportunity creation and to evaluate Hall and Sobel (2006) entrepreneurial outcome process which will be applied as a tool to structure the narrative of this research.

### **2.1 Definitions of entrepreneurship**

Earlier literature has primarily focused on entrepreneurship as a source of opportunity creation (Alvarez and Barney, 2007; Fuduric, 2008; Hang, Garnsey and Ruan, 2013; Shane and Venkataraman, 2000; Ireland, Hitt, and Sirmon, 2003). Though this research stressed entrepreneurship as a unique source of opportunity for wealth-creation and activity, there has not been any universal definition of entrepreneurship (Ireland, Hitt and Sirmon, 2003). As the concept of entrepreneurship is perceived to be sophisticated in its content, academic research towards the discipline has been made challenging (Gutterman, 2015).

Despite the persistent challenge, famous scholars across a broad range of fields have presented their definitions and conceptualization of the entrepreneur and entrepreneurship (Hébert et al. 2015). Cantillon (1755) assert the entrepreneur as a "go-between" or "between-takers" who bears risks. He emphasized that the entrepreneur buys goods and services at a specific price and aim to sell at an uncertain price in the future (Ahmad and Seymour, 2008). Say (1803) took a holistic view of the entrepreneur and entrepreneurship and described the entrepreneur as a manager who utilizes all means of production. Say stressed that the main actor of production in the economy is the entrepreneur (Bula, 2012). Schumpeter (1934) on the other hand, described the entrepreneur as someone who is driven by innovation.

According to Schumpeter, innovation and technical change are driven by entrepreneurship, which in turn, generate economic growth (Shane, Locke and Collins, 2003). Drucker (1964) was the first to acknowledge Schumpeter's definition of the entrepreneur and described entrepreneurship as an act of innovation which involves

the entrepreneur ability to utilize existing resources with new wealth-producing capacity (Ahmad and Seymour, 2008). Dollinger (1995) further defined entrepreneurship as the creation of an innovative economic organization to gain or grow under risks and uncertainty (Kruger, 2004). His definition of the entrepreneur and entrepreneurship does not only support Schumpeter's (1934) description of the entrepreneur but also recognized venture creation and growth maximization as core constructs of entrepreneurship.

The consistent view that opportunity recognition is associated with an ongoing business activity rather than with specific opportunity-seeking activity reinforced the importance of the nature of the entrepreneur and behavior (Johanson and Vahlne, 2007; Kruger, 2004). Furthermore, the way entrepreneurs utilize opportunity recognition at the marketplace support the three most popular explanations of why entrepreneurs and non-entrepreneurs differ in their abilities such as personality differences, cognitive differences, and social network differences (Dyer, Gregersen and Christensen 2008).

### 2.1.1 The nature of entrepreneurship

As the definitions and conceptualizations of entrepreneurship have been put forward by scholars across a broad range of fields, prior research in entrepreneurship has sought to identify the distinguishing characteristics of the entrepreneur (Dyer et al., 2008). For instance, "psychology-based researchers have renewed interest in entrepreneurs' characteristics as predictors of success by moving beyond the past focus on traits to study competencies, motivation, cognition, and behavior" (Baum and Locke, 2004). Nonetheless, the intertwinement between creativity, invention, and innovation, as well as opportunity spotting and entrepreneurship, remain the core construct towards understanding the nature of entrepreneurship (Burns, 2007, p. 35-38). These key characteristics of the entrepreneur are discussed below:

**1 Ability to be Creative:** Today, the increasing globalization and information technology continue to boost entrepreneurial opportunities and business creation. For instance, Soriano and Dobon (2009) highlight six hypotheses on the impact of in-

creasing globalization and information technology. These hypotheses include, technological change had reduced the extent of scale economies in business operation, increased globalization had rendered markets more volatile because of competition from a more significant number of foreign rivals, whereas, deregulation and privatization promote the entry of new and small firms into markets that were previously protected and inaccessible. Also, there is a continuous change in consumer taste from standardized, mass-produced goods towards stylized personalized products facilitates, as high wage and salaries countries have reduced the relative importance of large-scale production and instead fostered the importance of the entrepreneurial activity. Moreover, there is an unceasing change in workforce towards greater cooperation of females, immigrants, and young and old workers may be more conducive to smaller rather than larger enterprises, due to the greater premium placed on job flexibility (Soriano and Dobon, 2009.)

Nevertheless, as the entrepreneurial action to opportunity recognition takes place over time through uncertainty, creativity is warranted. The reason is that business operation cannot be successful unless the entrepreneur or enterprise swiftly recognizes uncertainty, market risks, and opportunities, and for which entrepreneurs must mobilize resources before they implement changes and make their impact creatively. For example, in making things better, the goal of the entrepreneur and enterprise ranges from improving productivity, and efficiency, as well as achieve speed, enhanced comfort, and influence rate of return positively (Okpara, 2007.)

Even though creativity is an important characteristic generally associated with entrepreneurs and successful managers, a need to understand the perception of opportunity is essential for a successful business reality (Lerch, Thai, Puhakka and Helmchen, 2015; Burns, 2007). As Lerch et al. (2015) highlight, the need to understand the perception of opportunity is because "knowledge spillover into entrepreneurship depends not only on ordinary human capital but also, more importantly, on creativity embodied in creative individuals and in diverse urban environments that attract creative classes." Hence, for an invention to become a commercial opportunity, there must be a close association between creativity and entrepreneurship (Burns, 2007, p. 23)

**2 Ability to spot Opportunities:** The ability to spot and develop opportunities for value maximization remain core towards successful entrepreneurial growth. The ability to recognize opportunities has led to threefold categorization: opportunity recognition, which is the ability to connect known products with existing demand to exploit a previously identified opportunity, opportunity discovery, which is the linkage between demand and supply; and opportunity creation, within which neither the supply nor demand exists prior to entrepreneurial action—the entrepreneur participates in creating both (Holcombe, 2003; Dyer et al., 2008.)

Although the sources of entrepreneurial opportunity recognition come from the activities of other entrepreneurs, the opportunities themselves are objective and unknown to all parties (Shane and Venkataraman, 2000). Hence, it is crucially important for entrepreneurs to be aware of the five core processes of opportunity recognition and business development formation. These core processes include entrepreneurial alertness, information asymmetry, and prior knowledge, as well as social networks, personality traits, and the type of opportunity itself (Ardichvilia, Cardozob and Ray, 2003.)

Despite the entrepreneurial opportunity recognition being a subjective process, academic researchers and policymakers across wide-ranging fields have developed various types of models as to how countries can ensure swift opportunity recognition for entrepreneurial growth (see e.g., Acs, 2006; Ács and Nicola, 2009; Gnyawali and Fogel, 1994; Olafsen and Cook, 2016; King, 1993; Busenitz, Gomez, and Spencer, 2000). For instance, a recent project by the OECD (2017) highlights numerous actions developing countries can implement to boost youth entrepreneurial potential and opportunity utilization. These actions include states ability to invest in comprehensive entrepreneurial programs: to offer the society multiple services simultaneously, swiftly promote youth entrepreneurship spirit through success stories and role models, as well as integrate entrepreneurship education in formal schooling. Also, developing economies should simplify administrative procedures for business registration, encourage formalization through the right mix of incentives and sanctions, and continuously evaluate entrepreneurship activities and actions to make future recommendations (OECD, 2017.)



As the ability to spot market opportunity remain the most distinguishing characteristic of the entrepreneur, invention and innovation remain the full prime characteristic to swiftly create and exploit opportunity recognition (Burns, 2007, p. 23). Perhaps because the swift instigation of new business development is the responsibility of the entrepreneurs, and their experiences to be fully aware of the various challenges of embarking on innovative investment. For this reason, innovation requires unique entrepreneurial mindsets and management skills, and the cooperation of the whole team for new business development to be fruitful (Okpara, 2007.)

**3 Invention and Innovation:** Dyer et al. (2008) highlight two primary definitions of the innovative entrepreneur: "the founder of a new venture that offered a unique value proposition relative to incumbents (e.g., new or different feature set, pricing, convenience, customizability)"; and "the person who came up with the original idea to start the venture." Today, the intertwinement between innovation and entrepreneurship is theoretically and practically significant, perhaps because as Schumpeter (1934) described, an invention to create a new market product or service, is the critical force in creating new demand and entrepreneurs bring the innovations to the market (Dyer et al., 2008). Although innovation can take many different forms, it requires the entrepreneur spontaneity, and creative response to changes in the market environment - as the ability to innovate is more than just invention and goes beyond the product of research (Burns, 2007, p. 35).

Burns (2007, p. 58) asserts that there are five types of innovation that entrepreneurs can embark on to boost competitiveness. These include the introduction of a new or improved good or service to the market, the initiation of a new business process, as well as the opening of a new market, the identification of a source of supply of raw materials, and the creation of a new type of industrial organization. All these types of innovation reinforced the dynamism of change, and how innovation must break the nature of how things are carried out in the current market environment – as merely introducing a new product or service is not necessarily innovation.

### 2.1.2 The importance of entrepreneurship

Nowadays, many economists would claim that entrepreneurship is vital to economic progress as the consequence of entrepreneurial activities may affect the broader agenda of regional and national economic growth (Chaston 2010; Stel, Carree and Thurik, 2005). As a consequence, organizations like the African Union (AU), OECD and the European Commission have increased their focus on entrepreneurship education and collaborations, even though the role of entrepreneurship activities in economic development varies from one economy to another, due to material resources, industrial climate and the responsiveness of the policy framework to the entrepreneurial ecosystem (Stevenson and Lundström, 2001).

There are various variables to explain the influence of entrepreneurship at micro and macro levels. Some of these variables include job creation, promotion of innovation, promotion of capital formation, promotion of export trade, as well as creation social change and promotion of regional development (Dhaliwal, 2016.)

**1) Job Creation:** One fundamental importance of entrepreneurship is the immediate creation of job opportunities for the unemployed. Chaston (2010) contends that most employment growth at the regional and national levels are attributing to most firms that thrive. A view that is strongly supported by Carree and Thurik (2002) when commenting on small and large firms, as they stressed, new and (infant) firms grow on average, more significant than larger and well-established firms. Perhaps, a key reason why in Finland entrepreneurship is perceived to be a core for job generation, as the country boost the most suitable regulatory environment for entrepreneurship than Nordic and EU member states. For instance, 49% of adults (18-64 years) in the nation has acknowledged favorable opportunities for entrepreneurship, and 10% of adults expect to provide 20 or more job opportunities during the next five years (Suomalainen et al., 2016.) Subsequently, such job creation will reduce the burden of unemployment which, in turn, foster economic development of the nation.

**2) Promote Innovation:** It is evident that entrepreneurship aid the promotion of innovation through the creation of new technologies, products, as well as goods and

services. As Braunerhjelm (2010) synthesized Schumpeter's stance on entrepreneurship, innovation, and economic development, the process of economic development could be separated into three stages. These stages include the discovery of new things or a new way of doing (known as innovation), the successful commercialization of a new good or service stemming from scientific discoveries, and the adoptions and diffusions of new products and processes to markets". It is the entrepreneur that brings economic development through the introduction of new ideas and a new combination of factors (Dhaliwal, 2016).

**3) Promote Capital Formation:** Entrepreneurship activities promote capital formation through public saving mobilization as entrepreneurs use their capital as well as borrow resources for new business formation. The entrepreneurial ability to continue producing goods and services will also lead to value addition and wealth creation which are all essential for the industrial and overall economic development of a state (Dhaliwal, 2016.) Thus, as Sasikumar (2017) assert entrepreneurs are human agent needed to mobilize capital to exploit natural resources to create markets and to carry on trade. Perhaps, the reason is that, without capital formation in an economy, economic development would likely remain static.

**4) Promote Export Trade:** Entrepreneurship activities also play a crucial role in promoting a favorable country's export trade. As in most cases, entrepreneurs possess the ability to swiftly producing goods and services in large scale to earn a considerable amount of foreign exchange from export to reduce the import duties requirement. Thus, entrepreneurship acts as an essential ingredient that stimulates economic progress using entrepreneurial activities that reduce the pressure on a country balance of payment (Dhaliwal, 2016; Sasikumar, 2017.)

**5) Create Social Change:** Ahortor (2009) asserts that "social development refers to an irreversible improvement in the social life of an individual or a community arising from social interaction that swiftly ensures social cohesion, congeniality, and security." It is through the various unique offering of goods and services that entrepreneurs break away from tradition and indirectly support freedom by reducing dependency

on old systems and technologies and provide the tools for others to effect change in the long run (Dhaliwal, 2016; Boettke and Coyne, 2004).

**6) Promote Regional Development:** Another critical effect of entrepreneurship activity is the ability to aid the removal of regional disparities in less developed and backward communities. Such activity is achieved through an act to accelerate the creation, diffusion, and application of new ideas. The creation of more industries leads to more development and hence promote a balanced regional development (Dhaliwal, 2016).

Given that entrepreneurs are crucially essential for economic development, it is not surprising that across some regions, there is growing evidence that entrepreneurship activities are on the increase due to growing economic freedoms and suitable policy framework (Stevenson and Lundström, 2001).

## **2.2 Entrepreneurship trend in Africa and Europe**

Scholars across different fields have present overwhelming economic and social findings and arguments why governments should be embracing business startup and further reduce red tape to ease firm entry and exit. Therefore, in assessing entrepreneurial trends across countries, the Global Entrepreneurship Index (GEI) uses fourteen different components of the entrepreneurial ecosystem to swiftly measure the quality of entrepreneurship as well as the depth of the supporting entrepreneurial climate. These components include opportunity perception, startup skills, risk acceptance, networking, cultural support, opportunity perception, technology absorption, human capital, competition, product innovation, process innovation, high growth, internationalization, and risk bearing (Acs, Szerb, and Lloyd, 2018.) Although there are little available materials on the best practice of entrepreneurial-oriented activities, the global entrepreneurial ecosystem continues its upward trend.

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are playing a pivotal role in socio-economic development across Africa and Europe (Barkawi, 2015). For instance, in emerging economies, SMEs (1-250 employees) account for 45 percent of total em-

ployment and 33 percent of GDP. In Sub-Saharan Africa region, the sector accounts for more than 95 percent of all firms, whereas in OECD, SMEs account for about 70 percent of job creation and in EU, the sector represents 99 percent of an estimated 19.3 million enterprises (Lall, 2003; OECD, 2017; Muriithi, 2017.) These empirical findings illustrate the importance of entrepreneurship activities and the continuous shift from large to small business operations in Africa and Europe.

According to Wennekers and Thurik (1999), “Globalization and technology advancement are the major determinants of this shift in western economies”, whereas, it is elusive to understand the driving force of this shift in developing economies like Sierra Leone. Hence, as states attempt to increase their entrepreneurial activities, the need to understand entrepreneurial intentions (EI) remain essential, as it plays a crucial role in evaluating the entrepreneurial behavior in discovery, evaluation, and exploitation of opportunity (Shane and Venkataraman 2000). The figure below indicates a report of EI in ten sub-Saharan African countries and comparisons with other regional averages:

<b>Economy</b>	<b>Entrepreneurial intentions **</b>
Angola	70%
Botswana	72%
Ethiopia	24%
Ghana	60%
Malawi	70%
Namibia	45%
Nigeria	44%
South Africa	12%
Uganda	79%
Zambia	55%
<b>Sub-Saharan Africa Average (unweighted)</b>	<b>53%</b>
Latin America and Caribbean Average (unweighted)	34%
MENA Average (unweighted)	26%
Asia Pacific and South Asia Average (unweighted)	17%
European Union Average (unweighted)	13%
Non-European Union Average (unweighted)	14%
United States	13%

**Table 1: GEM report: Entrepreneurial intentions in ten sub-Saharan Africa countries and comparisons with other regional averages, (Xavier, Kelley, Kew, Herrington and Vorderwülbecke, 2012)**

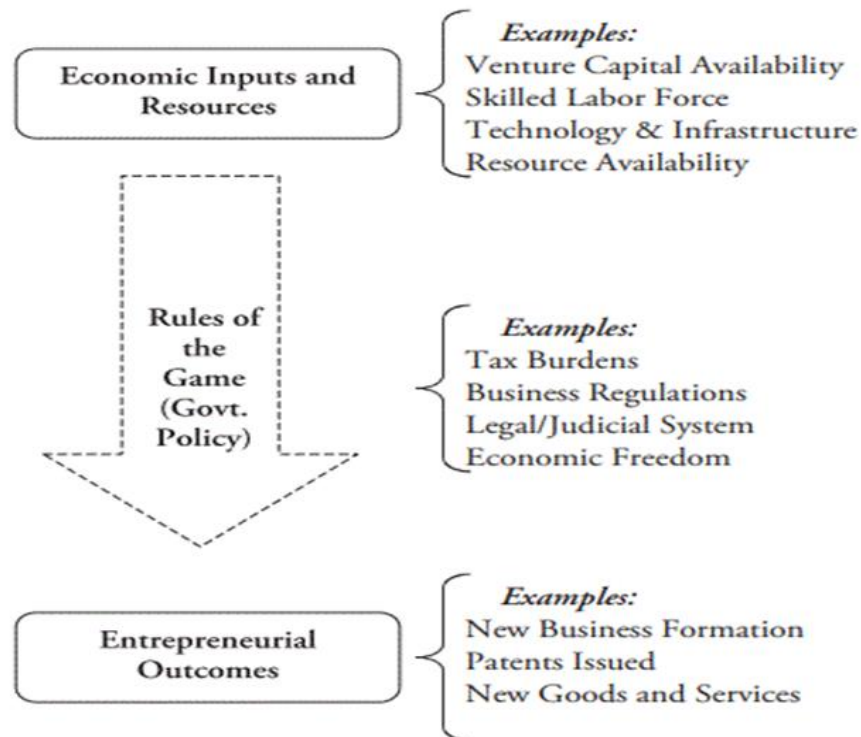
Although Table 1 above indicates that on average some Sub-Saharan Africa countries have high societal attitudes towards entrepreneurship than European Union and non-European Union member states average, it is imperative to understand that the extent and timing of this attitude vary across states. For instance, a recent report by GEI indicates that entrepreneurial opportunity perception in Chad and Mali is at 15 % and 24 % respectively, whereas in Finland, entrepreneurial opportunity perception is 95%, and in Albania, it is 24% (Acs et al., 2018.) One key reason for the disparity in entrepreneurship attitude across countries is the policy framework employs to support, nurture, and offer an exemplary ecosystem for entrepreneurial growth. For instance, GEM report (Suomalainen et al., 2016) indicate that Finland scores better than its peers on government policy towards supporting entrepreneurship, while at the same time, the country's - general and regulatory policies are perceived more suitable than in Nordic countries or EU member states on average (Suomalainen, 2016).

The GEM report (2016) on Finland's entrepreneurial landscape provides evidence concerning state policy and entrepreneurial outcome. For the first, entrepreneurship is a dynamic process of personal vision, ability to change and be creative, and it requires all the relevant components (education, finance, passion, programs) for the creation of a new business idea and creative solutions (Suomalainen, 2016). For the second, unless governments ensure that entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial growth are at the forefront of political manifestos, current literature stance that entrepreneurship can act as a principal mechanism to building prosperity and stimulate national growth will not be actualized at all states. Therefore, it is evident that the entrepreneurship outcome is strongly influenced by existing state policy and framework.

### **2.3 The entrepreneurial outcome processes**

State policy plays a crucial role in entrepreneurial growth in developing economies. The reason is that economic freedom, resources allocation, and opportunities are primarily established through state policy framework under which the entrepreneurial ecosystem exists. Hence, it is immensely crucial for policymakers to understand the

gradual process through which entrepreneurial growths and outcomes are generated (Hall and Sobel, 2006.):



**Figure 1: The Entrepreneurial Outcome Process (Hall and Sobel, 2006)**

Figure 1 above shows the general theoretical notion about what influence entrepreneurial growth (resource availability, technology & infrastructure, economic freedom). It is theoretically evident (see, e.g., Audretsch, 2010; Hall and Sobel; Mason and Brown, 2013) that economic resources foster entrepreneurial growth. For example, the availability of technology and infrastructure can influence the likelihood of engaging in entrepreneurial activities. However, somewhat understated in Hall and Sobel theoretical analysis is whether their entrepreneurial outcome process framework can influence entrepreneurial growth across all states, especially in developing economies.

### **3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

This section describes the theoretical framework used when conducting this research. It comprehensively evaluates the theory of legitimacy, what constitutes a state legitimacy, and further provide an insight into what threaten state legitimacy policy actions and activities.

#### **3.1 Definitions of legitimacy**

Since the emergence of democratic governments, the definition of legitimacy has changed remarkably, as stakeholders across various lines (such as academics, activists, politicians) employed the concept of legitimacy theory differently (Coicaud, 2002). Individuals, families, and corporate or large groups, to which legitimacy applies all have specific political roles and interests. Henceforth, public actors must decide whether the concept of legitimacy should be viewed as a right way of electing a leader or whether it should be evaluated in terms of its outcome results (such as welfare) (Lynn, 2005, p. 14.) Although the concept of legitimacy has been applied differently, there is a consensus that the core notion of legitimacy concerns the recognition to govern (Coicaud, 2002).

Stillman (1974, p. 32) defined the idea of legitimacy as "the compatibility of the results of governmental output in the eyes of relevant stakeholders such as targets individuals, firms or groups." Stillman further emphasizes that a state is legitimate if economic inputs or resources are compatible with the general society. In recognizing entrepreneurship as an embedded social process (which include creativity, opportunity recognition, and innovation), it is evident that based on Stillman's definition, achieving entrepreneurship growth will be a challenge for most developing economies. The reason for the challenge is because "how entrepreneurs are embedded will affect their ability to draw on social and economic resources, relevant to influence the entrepreneurial outcome" (Jack and Anderson, 2002, p. 13). In respect to Stillman definition, Mousal and Hassan (2005) defined legitimacy as "congruence between organizational actions and societal values, and legitimization as actions that institutions take either to signal value congruency or to change the social value." Consistent



with Mousal and Hassan definition of legitimacy is Suchman's (1995) and Deegan's (2006) explanations of legitimacy.

Suchman (1995, p. 571) defined legitimacy as "a generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions.", Moreover, in respect to Suchman definition, Deegan (2006) (as cited in Hoque, 2006, p. 166-167) asserted that the concept of legitimacy seeks to describe or explain organization's behavior in terms of effort made to appear legitimate, rather than prescribing how organizations should behave.

Lindblom (1994, p. 3) defined legitimacy as "a condition or status which exist when an entity's value system is congruent with the value system of the larger social system of which the entity is part of'. When a difference, or potential, exists between the state organization and society, there is a threat to the entity's legitimacy". It is evident that these various definitions affirm that society today has wide-ranging presumptions towards legitimacy and its absence has profound consequences towards the state, citizens, as well as other stakeholders and organizations (Gilley, 2006). In reverting the definition of legitimacy, Stillman (1974) definition directs my attention to a critical question: what influence entrepreneurial creativity in developing economies?

It is apparent that the issue of legitimacy is central towards understanding what influence entrepreneurial growth in developing economies because entrepreneurial growth depends on existing opportunities and resources available within the ecosystem (Stevenson and Lundström, 2001). Thus, in a situation wherein legitimacy is 'lacking,' it is likely that entrepreneurs might experience constraints to boost creativity, spot existing market opportunities and innovate. Therefore, state legal actions and activities must be compatible with entrepreneurs' expectations.

### **3.2 State legitimacy**

Due to increasing studies on legitimacy, there is a growing need among practitioners for a coherent and impartial synthesis on state legitimacy – more so, as a critical determinant of state structures and operations are embedding in the type of state legitimacy employ (Suchman, 1995; Gilley, 2006). Since society has wide-ranging presumptions towards legitimacy, one of the main aspects of state legitimacy is the outcome of economic inputs and resources. As Stillman (1974) states, the outcome of government inputs and resources must be swiftly ‘compatible with’ the value pattern of the general society. He further asserted that ‘compatible with’ implies government must ensure that state inputs and resources are within an accessible range from the present societal value (Stillman, 1974).

Reverting Suchman’s (1995) definition of legitimacy as socially constructed systems of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions, two main ‘sources of legitimacy’ are crucial for the observation of government and legitimacy assessment. The first source is the internal audience (such as politicians and public servants), who have standing and license, derived from the organization’s legitimating account of itself. The second source is external audiences (such as civil society groups, members of the general society) who ‘legitimately have collective authority over what is an acceptable theory’ (Deephouse and Suchman, 2008.) These two main ‘sources of legitimacy’ are critically important to assess state legitimacy, because since what shape state legitimacy is the deep society collective perceived about the state conduct. Therefore, the notion of a social contract between a state and civil society is profoundly central to understanding the legitimacy of the state.

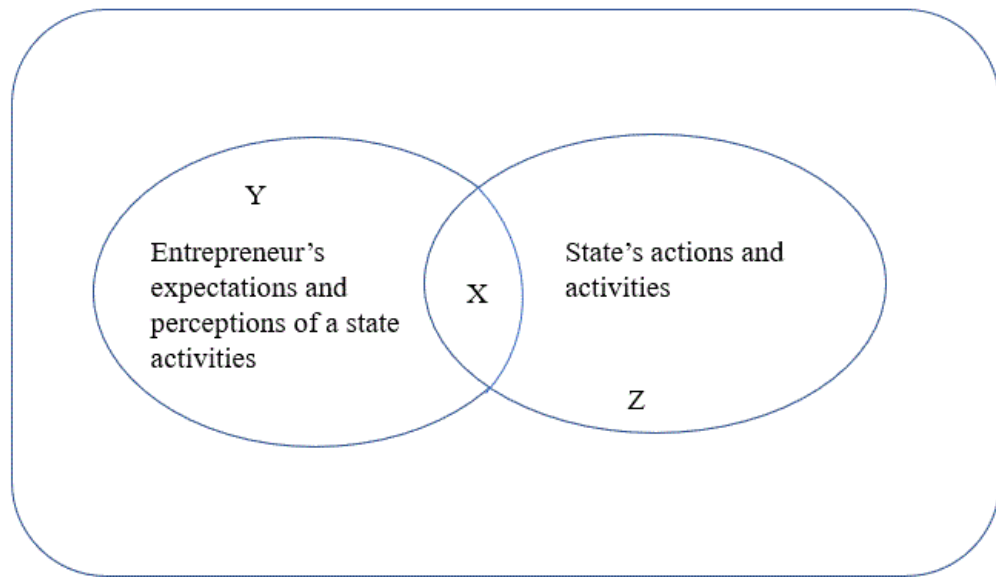
### **3.3 The social contract and legitimacy gap**

The theoretical concept of the social contract is not new as the concept has been discussed by various philosophers (Thomas Hobbes 1588-1679; John Locke, 1632-1704; Jean-Jacques Rousseau, 1712-1778). Though these philosophers all have a different explanation of the concept, consistent with their view is ‘the social contract’ is related to different collective features, which sometimes focuses on society and

sometimes on state institutions, wherein the latter dimension focus on the need for state compliance with the expectations of the society (Nbeti, 2012)

In articulating the discussion towards the social contract, Hoque (2006, p. 170) reinstated Shocker and Sethi (1974, p. 67) opines that "any social institution (including state and religious group) functions in society via a social contract, expressed or implied, whereby its survival and growth are centers on two key factors". These factors include the delivery of some socially beneficial ends to society, and the swift allocation of economic inputs, and other benefits to the state from which it derives its power. Thus, a state institution must continuously meet the persistent searches of legitimacy and continuously showing that there is the need for its services, actions and activities (Shocker and Sethi, 1974, p. 67). Although state actions and activities must be legitimate, if the general society does not satisfy with the existing state actions and activities, there is a tendency that such dissatisfaction within the society will hinder existing social contract, thus induce legitimacy gap.

According to Seabrooke (2005), the legitimacy gap is any arising disparity between the state's policy framework against the broader society's intersubjective understandings of how the economy should work. There are two primary sources of legitimacy gap. Firstly, a gap will occur if societal expectations change, even though the state policy framework is operating in the same manner. Secondly, a gap may occur through a lack of disclosures when previously unknown information becomes known to the society (Hoque, 2006, p. 163.) Below is a depiction of the legitimacy gap:



**Figure 2: Events/Issues and Corporate Legitimacy (adapted from O'Donovan, 2002)**

Although Figure 2 above does not provide a measure of the 'legitimacy gap' before state actions and activities are threatened, it does provide a comprehensive explanation of the state's disclosure behavior. For example, the area marked X represents congruence between state policy and entrepreneur's expectations of the state policy actions and activities, based on shared social values and norms, whereas, areas Y and Z represent incongruence between the state's actions and entrepreneur's perceptions of what these actions should be. Most significantly, the legitimacy gap occurs the further away the entrepreneur's expectations and perceptions (area Y) are from the state's actions and activities (area Z). For this reason, the state aim is to ensure that area X is as large as possible, thus increasing the legitimacy of the state's actions and activities (O'Donovan, 2002.)

Since legitimacy theory is based on civil society perceptions of organization activities, it is thus essential to understand that the concept of legitimacy can be swiftly manipulated or influence. As in most cases, state's and policymakers often favor one group of citizens, because the task of 'maintaining' legitimacy is considered more natural than 'repairing' or 'gaining' legitimacy (Hoque 2006, p. 168; O'Donovan, 2002.) In that regard, when a state tends to deviate its actions from society's expectations and perceptions, there is a potential for having problems in 'maintaining' or

‘retaining’ legitimacy. Hence, Tang (2017) offers one of the most insightful contributions for maintaining legitimacy: the use of legalization strategy.

According to Tang, the legalization strategy ensures an organization to be consistent with the entrepreneurial ecosystem recognized by the civil society, and in obtaining legitimacy, the state must apply a series of changes in its structure and behavior of strategic initiatives. For instance, economic inputs and resources must be allocated evenly within the ecosystem. In achieving this, the state can implement three sub-strategies of the legalization strategy, the compliance legalization strategy, selective legalization strategy, and manipulation of legalization strategy.

Tang defined the compliance legalization strategy as the state’s ability to strictly operate by the existing societal standards, systems, and norms to ensure social recognition and acceptance. On the other hand, Tang argues that the selective legalization strategy is centered on the decision of the entrepreneur’s ability to gain recognition and acceptance from the relevant state ministries and organizations, whereas, the manipulation strategy refers to the impact, control or changes arising from the existing social system, norms, and concepts to obtain stakeholders recognition and acceptance (Tang, 2017.) Given that legitimacy lies in the heart of state disclosure, Tang’s tactic is essential for maintaining and obtaining state legitimacy. The reason is that, if the state actions and activities are considered non-legitimate by entrepreneurs, it will deter the existing social contract between the state and entrepreneurs, which will subsequently create a legitimacy gap.

In summary, the conceptual framework of this study adopts Stillman (1974) definition of legitimacy. Stillman recognized legitimacy as a situation wherein state actions and activities are in harmony with individuals, organizations or groups expectations and perceptions. The reason for adopting the Stillman definition of legitimacy is to link the conceptual framework of legitimacy theory to the purpose of this research.

Since the purpose of this study is to understand the legitimacy of the existing policy and its implication on youth entrepreneurship growth, Stillman’s definition suits my research purpose remarkably, as he focuses on factors such as compatibility, state

actions and activities, and entrepreneur's expectations. The theory of legitimacy is adopted because there is not usually a direct theoretical framework link between state policy and entrepreneurial outcome.

It is why a linkage is necessary to explain how existing entrepreneurial resources and state policy influence the entrepreneurial outcome. For instance, since the growth of entrepreneurship is embedded in individual's creativity, ability to spot an opportunity, and innovation, the linkage of the social contract is essential to assess whether a state policy and entrepreneurial activities meet the expectations and perceptions of its motivated entrepreneurs. Also, the responsibilities and actions of policymakers must be legitimate, in order to ensure the linkage between state policy and entrepreneurial outcome generate new business formations and growth.

## 4 SIERRA LEONE - YOUTH AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

This section provides an overview of Sierra Leone as a youthful state and highlight factors such as education, employment, and the current model of entrepreneurship establish to influence the entrepreneurial outcome.

### 4.1 Brief country background

Sierra Leone is a country situated on the West Coast of Africa, with an area of 71,740 sq. km (27,699 sq. miles). There are twelve (12) districts in Sierra Leone, and the capital city is Freetown. The official language is English, and Krio serves as the unifying language for all tribes across the country. According to Statistics Sierra Leone, the country has an estimated population of 7 million people – 59.0 percent live in rural areas, and 41.0 percent live in urban areas. 44.2 percent of the country population has never attended school, 32.7 percent of the population live in rural areas and 11.5 percent in the urban areas (Statistics Sierra Leone, 2015.) Since targeted education plays a vital role in youth’s ability to succeed as entrepreneurs in developing economies, the importance of school attendance in Sierra Leone is crucial to building relevant skills and knowledge to foster entrepreneurial commitment (Wilson, Kickul and Marlino, 2007). The figure below illustrates the breakdown of school attendance in Sierra Leone.

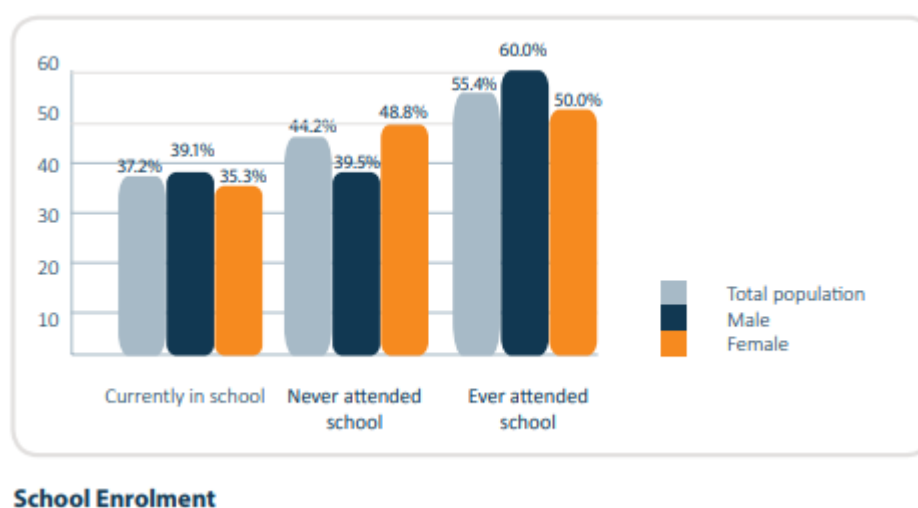


Figure 3: Sierra Leone’s School Enrolment Statistics (Statistics Sierra Leone, 2015)

Figure 3 above shows the percentage level of school enrolment in Sierra Leone. While the total population ever attended school is 55.4 percent, the total population currently in school (37.2 percent) is well below the total population that has never attended school (44.2 percent). The lack of school going pupils could prove that the future outlook of entrepreneurial growth in Sierra Leone is startling because of the current lack of targeted education among youth. Hence, it is evident that policymakers in Sierra Leone must implement targeted education in order to influence the total population currently in school and those that have never attended school.

#### 4.2 Youth and entrepreneurship

The National Youth Policy of Sierra Leone defines youth as young people (male or female) between the age of 15 and 35 years of age. Today, the government of Sierra Leone has realized the importance of the self-employed sector as well as a family member and private enterprises as a catalyst for the national growth, as 91 percent of youths (between the age of 15-35 years) are self-employed. In previous years, Sierra Leone's economic growth has been led by the robust minerals sector. It is, consequently, this transition process that is reflecting in the diversity in these new sectors. For instance, most young innovators and entrepreneurs use simple skills and machinery as well as local raw materials and technology (Fowler, 2017). Figure 4 shows a breakdown of employment in different sectors in Sierra Leone.

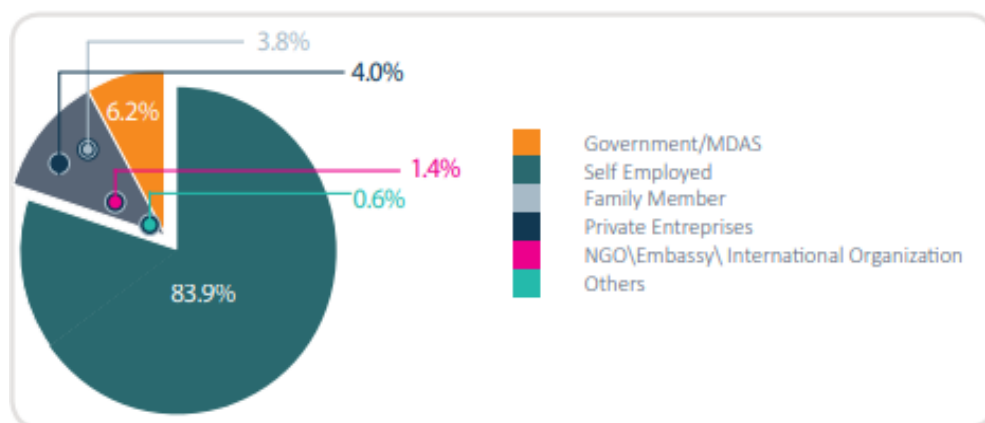


Figure 4: Sierra Leone's Employment Sector (Statistics Sierra Leone, 2015)

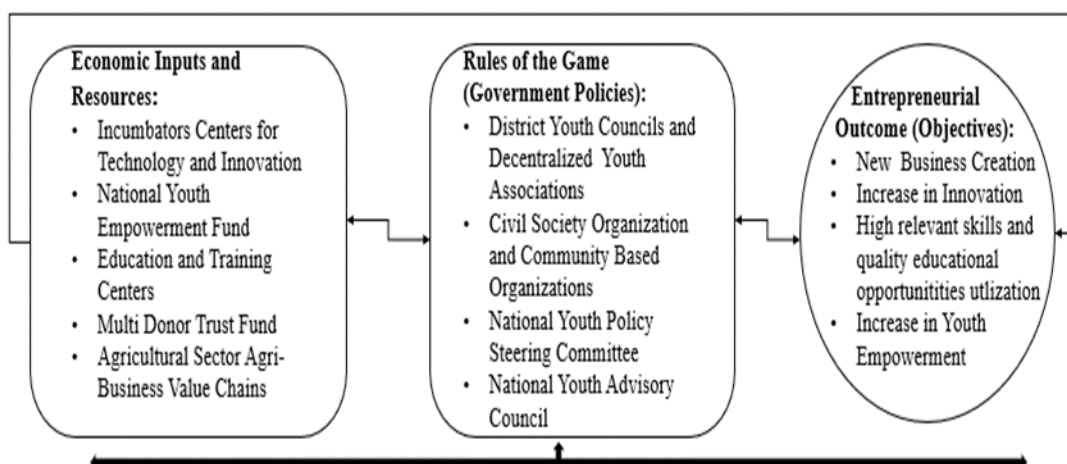


Figure 5 above shows the importance of the self-employed sector in Sierra Leone, which represent 83.9 percent of the country's total employment sector. This percentage highlight that Sierra Leone as an economy is highly dependent on the self-employed sector which constitutes 91 percent of youth to boost national competitiveness and growth. Since the establishment rate of the self-employed sector among youth in Sierra Leone is higher than adults, it is likely that the current percentage (37.2 percent) of the population currently in school will likely affect future youth commitments to start their employment.

### **4.3 The model of entrepreneurial growth in Sierra Leone**

Since the 1991 – 2002 civil war and subsequent Ebola outbreak, the government of Sierra Leone has implemented a wide range of actions to tackle and address the many challenges youth face across the country. Most notably is the establishment of the National Youth Policy and its Commission Act of 2009, and the Agenda-for-Prosperty (AFP), a committee set up to tackle the issue of women, low- and middle-income families across the country. The establishment of these organizations is critical towards empowering and engaging youth across the country.

In encouraging youth towards entrepreneurship, it is evident that based on the Ministry of Youth Affairs review handbook, the government of Sierra Leone is currently adapting the traditional model employed by Hall and Sobel (2006) which evaluates core processes towards a successful entrepreneurial outcome. Figure 5 illustrates the current model and core processes towards entrepreneurial growth in Sierra Leone:



**Figure 5: The Model of Entrepreneurial Growth in Sierra Leone (Ministry of Youth Affairs review handbook, 2014)**

The process of entrepreneurial outcome model in Sierra Leone reflects Hall and Sobel (2006) framework in a coherent manner. For instance, according to Hall and Sobel framework, economic inputs and resources consist of, resource availability, technology, and infrastructure, whereas, government policy include business regulations, tax burden, and economic freedom all of which influence the new business formation and the production of new goods and services. Below is a comprehensive analysis of how the current model of entrepreneurship employ in Sierra Leone reflects Hall and Sobel (2006) entrepreneurial outcome process.

#### 4.3.1 Economic inputs and resources

Policymakers in Sierra Leone continue to provide a full range of economic inputs and resources towards achieving a successful entrepreneurial outcome. For instance, INTERVENTION III (Education and Training) of the National Youth Policy is committed to ensuring that all Sierra Leonean youths have access to quality education and training. This section of the National Youth Policy report entails seven strategic objectives: 1) to ensure that a holistic approach exists that includes all key stakeholders to tackle pressing issues and out-of-school youth, 2) to ensure a swift repositioning of education and training programs and improve access to schools for

all youths. This policy also aims to provide relevant materials, technical and financial support, improve the standard of living for out-of-school youths and provide immediate assistance to needy families. It also aim to construct more centers for primary and secondary pupils, provide adequate training and recruits, qualified teachers, increase the number of qualified educators in the classrooms and provide relevant school materials to improve access to quality education for all youth, and to evaluate and develop programs to improve the youth literacy rate in the country.

Additionally, other economic inputs or intervention programs (such as agri-business value chains, technology, and innovation as well as a multi-donor trust fund and the national youth empowerment fund), are established to ensure favorable entrepreneurial outcome and growth across the country. For example, the agri-business value chains are committed to ensuring the full participation of a new generation of youth in the revitalized agricultural sector in rural areas. The agri-business value chains aim to enable job creation in agri-business for all youth across the country.

#### 4.3.2 Rules of the Game (State policy organizations)

While creativity, opportunity recognition, and innovation are key drivers of the entrepreneurial growth (Burns, 2007, p. 23), state policy is a core blueprint for the immediate implementation of the entrepreneurial programs and projects (Obaji and Olugu, 2014). Therefore, the legitimacy and commitment of leading policymakers and organizations that promote youth creativity and innovation are crucial to ensure state policy actions and activities are compatible with entrepreneur's expectations and perceptions (Stillman, 1974). As mentioned earlier, there are two well-established organizations in Sierra Leone, responsible for ensuring that the state policies towards youth and entrepreneurial development in the country are aligned with entrepreneur's expectations: National Youth Commission (NYCOM) and its Act of 2009 and the Agenda-for-Prosperty (AFP).

The NYCOM act of 2009 is established to empower the youth and ensure that young people develop their potential, creativity, and skills for national development. In order to ensure the smooth running of the commission act of 2009, various associa-

tions, councils, and organizations have been set up. Some of these include; District Youth Councils and Decentralized Youth Associations, National Youth Advisory Council, Civil Society Organization and Community Based Organizations, and National Youth Policy Steering Committee, for the executions and overseeing of youth core policy programs across the country.

For instance, the District Youth Councils and Decentralized Youth Associations are primarily set up to identify and provide the necessary support to youth requiring assistance and participate in the implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of youth policy across the country. Similarly, the National Youth Advisory Council serves as the central meeting place for youth organizations, and a channel of communication for all youth-related government programs. Also, the council reports to the Director of Youth at the Ministry of Youth Affairs on all matters related to the development of young people in the country. Likewise, the National Youth Steering Committee is set up to ensure that youth policy and programs are mainstreamed to young people and other stakeholders in the country.

The Civil Society and Community Based Organizations are set up to play an indispensable role in the development of young people. According to the Commission act of 2009, these organizations are expected to offer financial support to programs and projects, including training to youth and identified youth groups across the country. Also, these organizations aim to promote important programs targeted at nurturing the entrepreneurial culture for the youth, coordinate all civil society, and community-based projects plan to align with the new National Youth Policy priority and to communicate the opinions, aspirations, and intentions of youth and organizations across the country. The Agenda-for-Prosperty (AFP) in Sierra Leone serves as the country core agenda to becoming a middle-class economy by 2035 (Ministry of Youth Affairs, 2014).

According to the Ministry of Youth Affairs report, the AFP entails all youth development programs in the country and meticulously collaborates with various Ministries to increase youth employability and employment through its many prosperity pillars. For example, pillar 5 – Labor and Employment – primarily aims to render

access to financial services and support to the so-call ‘under-banked’ economically active youth and organizations. Also, pillar 5 provide labor restrictions which are mainly hampering youth and address high unemployment and under employ upshots among young people and women. Similarly, pillar 8 – Empowering women and girls through education for participation in decision-making by 2019 – is geared towards providing access to equal justice and economic opportunities across the country. It focuses on increasing women’s and girl’s participation and representation in the decision-making process to reduce socioeconomic barriers in education across schools. Additionally, the pillar 8 focuses on prevention and provide necessary response mechanisms to violence against women and girls and providing a conducive business environment for women (finance and capacity).

Given that these two organizations aim to implement the Sierra Leone government policy towards entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial growth, it is not surprising that entrepreneurial outcome is the critical indicator of entrepreneurship and innovation program in Sierra Leone.

#### 4.3.3 Entrepreneurial outcome (objectives)

The state of entrepreneurship in Sierra Leone is moderately weak compared with other countries in the Sub-Saharan region and beyond. According to the Global Entrepreneurship Index (GEI), Sierra Leone is ranked 132/137 in the world in terms of entrepreneurial attitudes, abilities, and aspiration, whereas in Sub-Saharan Africa the country is ranked 26/30 (Acs et al., 2018). Also, a report by Sierra Leone Opportunity for Business Action (SOBA) attained that successful entrepreneurs in the country are professionals in their late 30s to early 40s with an advanced level of education and vast working experience (SOBA, 2017). Meanwhile, due to the weak startup skills in the country, there is a paucity nature of entrepreneurs to use their creative ability to spot an opportunity. Even though according to the GEI (2018) report, product innovation remains a core area component to excite entrepreneurship growth. Consequently, the entrepreneur’s ability in the country to create new jobs, increase innovation, and social empowerment is not feasible, as 94 percent of entrepreneurs in

the country cannot afford to pay for the business support services they need (SOBA, 2017).

Meanwhile, the representation of youth in the country as a critical driver for economic prosperity through innovation and entrepreneurship obscures the challenge of entrepreneurship as the principal mechanism to building prosperity and stimulate growth. Most notably, as the current discord between supply and demand for business support across the country is alarming, and non-governmental organizations (such as Action Aid International, Oxfam GB, Advocacy for the Youth in Crisis Sierra Leone), continues to provide the highest business support services for youth and youth organizations across the country (SOBA, 2017).

In summary, Sierra Leone is a youth state, and the current policy framework is strongly oriented towards improving entrepreneurial outcome in the country. However, it is evident that as 44.2 percent of the total population never attended school, the future success of entrepreneurial growth is not evident, even though 91 percent of youth are self-employed. The following section will comprehensively justify the methodology and use of qualitative research in this study.

## 5 METHODOLOGY

This section describes the research methodology used to analyze the phenomenon of entrepreneurship and legitimacy. It also explains the reason for using qualitative research and a semi-structured interview and discusses the data collection method and analysis used. An in-depth description of the various part of the methodology is imperative, as most often, confusion surrounding research method is often related to lack of research clarity about the process of building theory from empirical cases, and further advancing the frontiers of academic knowledge (Eisenhardt, 1989).

### 5.1 Qualitative research

A qualitative analysis was used in the form of a semi-structured interview to get an in-depth description of the studied phenomenon. Characterized by its core aims which relate to understanding a specific aspect of individual or group social life, qualitative research encompasses the detail collection of raw materials, organization, and the swift interpretation of textual raw material resulting from talk or observation (Patton and Cochran, 2002; Malterud, 2001). Strauss and Corbin (1990) define qualitative research as "any research that produces findings not arrived at using statistical procedures or other means of quantification." Despite that, some researchers (see, e.g., Golafshani, 2003; Holloway and Todres, 2009; Malterud, 2001; Mays and Pope, 1995) have raised specific challenges of qualitative research, most notably because of reflexivity among qualitative researchers. The reason is that, most often, researchers cannot often realize that their feelings, reactions, and motives can impact research outcome.

The reason for chosen a qualitative method is to enable swift evaluation of raw materials that cannot be clearly or adequately done statistically, as this research seeks to understand the extent to which state policy programs and projects in Sierra Leone meet entrepreneur's expectations (Kamara, 2017). Also, qualitative study allows researchers to study the situation carefully with the intention to produce very well-founded cross-contextual observations rather than aspiring to weaker de-contextual version, as the method aims to answer 'what' 'how' or 'why' rather than 'how much' or

'how many' of a phenomenon of interest. Thus, suitable for producing words rather than numbers for raw data analysis, an essential focus of this research report. (Mason, 2012, p. 5; Patton and Cochran, 2002.) In fact, "unlike quantitative research that seeks causal determination, prediction, and generalization of findings, qualitative research seeks instead of illumination, understanding, and extrapolation to similar situations" (Hoepfl, 1997).

The remainder of this section is structured as follows. In the following subsection, I will comprehensively explain the data collection method. In subsection 'Interview procedures,' I will clearly explain the interview process and the reasons for choosing the interviewees, and subsection 'Data analysis process' discusses the data analysis method.

## **5.2 Data collection method**

As mentioned earlier in the background of this study, the goal of this study to understand whether state policy programs and projects in Sierra Leone meet entrepreneur's expectations. Hence, to ensure that the goal of this study is achieved, a semi-structured interview in the form of a face-to-face conversation was carried out in Freetown, Sierra Leone.

A semi-structured interviewing approach is adopted because it allows the use of pre-determined questions which instantly provide informality. It has been argued that a semi-structured interview builds a holistic snapshot as it enables researchers to swiftly obtain retrospective and real-time accounts by people experiencing the phenomenon of academic interest. Thus, a semi-structured interview is suitable to be used wherein there is only one chance to interview someone and gain reliable and comparable qualitative data (Gioia, Carley and Hamilton, 2013; Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007.) Due to participants tight work schedules, a face-to-face conversation was conducted on a flexible schedule. It is evident that face-to-face discussions have long been the most dominant interview technique employed by researchers in the field of qualitative research. It is because face-to-face discussions make more use of standardization of the situation and at the same time, "are characterized by synchronous



communication in time and place” through the consideration of social cues, such as voice, and body language (Opdenakker, 2006.) A detailed description of the interview is as follow.

### **5.3 Interview procedures**

The structure of the interviews was draft purposefully to align with the theoretical framework of the research, and some of the questions were well-planned ahead. The interviews were conducted in Krio and carried out routinely during December 2017 and January 2018. The design involved ten participants across three different groups of participants. Group 1 involves two (2) employees from the Sierra Leone Ministry of Youth Affairs and its Commission (NYCOM), whereas, group 2 involves two former employees from Sierra Leone Opportunities for Business Action (SOBA). Group 3 involves six (6) youth entrepreneurs residing in Freetown, Sierra Leone.

The interviews with participants from group 1 took place at their distinct head offices at Brookfield, Freetown, Sierra Leone. One of the interviews from group 2 took place at the Government Rokel Secondary School campus, Freetown and the other interview took place at the Center for Coordination of Youth Activities, Off Adelaide Street, Freetown. Four (4) of the interviews with the entrepreneurs took place at their discrete head offices in Freetown, and two of the interviews took place at their respective homes. Participants were fully aware that the conversation would be used as data for this research and the interviewees were chosen because of their vast experience in the entrepreneurial process and youth development affairs in the country.

For instance, NAYCOM dedicates to supporting and enhancing innovative youth in the country through the provision of cost-effective and superior services. It is attained through its Commission that provides various projects such as Youth Employment Support Project (a World Bank-funded program), the Youth Employment and Empowerment Project, as well as other youth employment and empowerment programs. Similarly, SOBA, a UK Aid-Funded private sector development program uses a market systems approach in Sierra Leone to promote ‘pro-poor economic growth across the country. Such an approach is realized through collaborations with

other partners in three (3) core areas: agriculture, sustainable energy, and professional services and entrepreneurship markets. The aim is to provide inclusive business practices across Sierra Leone and to scale innovation among youth (SOBA, 2017). Moreover, all the entrepreneurs have a minimum of ten (10) years' experience as youth entrepreneurs in the country.

Before the interviews, participants were notified about the focus of this research and were asked to answer freely to the questions. During the conversation, participants from group 1 were asked to reflect on the current state of government programs that aim to promote youth in entrepreneurship across the country. Furthermore, they were asked to reflect on the success rate of state programs and projects, as well as possible constraints in ensuring that the objectives of the state policy are achieved. Some of the questions include: *Are there any facilities or policy programs across the country that are purely for youth entrepreneurship purposes? How easily attainable are these policy programs to young people in the country, especially those living in the slum communities? What are some of the challenges facing the Ministry of Youth Affairs and its Commission in encouraging young people towards entrepreneurship?*

Equally, participants from group 2, were asked to give their assessment on the state programs and resources that aim to empower young people across the country, some of the questions asked include: *Are you aware of the state policy programs towards the promotion of youth entrepreneurship across the country? What are the challenges to youth entrepreneurship growth in Sierra Leone? Do you believe young people in this country have a chance to be successful entrepreneurs?*

Similarly, participants from group 3, were asked about their knowledge of the state programs for young people, their knowledge about the role of the Ministry of Youth and its Commission, as well as youth programs in their various communities. Some of the questions asked include: *Are you aware of the state programs that support and encourage young entrepreneurs? Do you feel that there are challenges to seek entrepreneurial support and access to state resources and programs in this country? Are you aware of the role and responsibilities of the Ministry of Youth Affairs and its Commission?*

Table 1 illustrates a breakdown of some of the interviews, the total number of participants from group 1 and 2, participants positions, date and duration of each interview.

GROUP	ORGANIZATION	INTERVIEWEE POSITION	DATE	DURATION (MINS)	
1	NAYCOM	Minister of Youth Affairs	29/12/2017	45	} Policy makers
		Commissioner Communication Officer	10/01/2018	63	
2	SOBA	Lead Communication Advisory	17/12/2018	46	} Entrepreneur's
		Intervention Lead Analyst	18/12/2017	40	
3	Generation Movie Production	Scriptwriter/Director, Owner	12/01/2018	70	} Entrepreneur's
		A. B D Abdulrahman Bakery S.L	16/12/2017	65	
		A. J C Aluminum Enterprises	20/12/2017	58	

**Table 1: An Extract of the Interviews**

Each of these questions aligns significantly towards the entrepreneurial outcome and the extent to which the government of Sierra Leone encourages entrepreneurship among youth, with specific attention to the theory of legitimacy. In articulating the empirical review of this study, I will be using direct core citations translated into English in the empirical and discussion sections. Hereafter, I will intertwiningly use group numbers, organizations, and positions of some of the interviewees throughout this study. The following subsection will comprehensively describe the analysis process of this study.

#### 5.4 Data analysis process

The Gioia method is used to analyze the various interviews to get a conceptualized view of the data, and then transcribed and coded based on own theoretical interpreta-

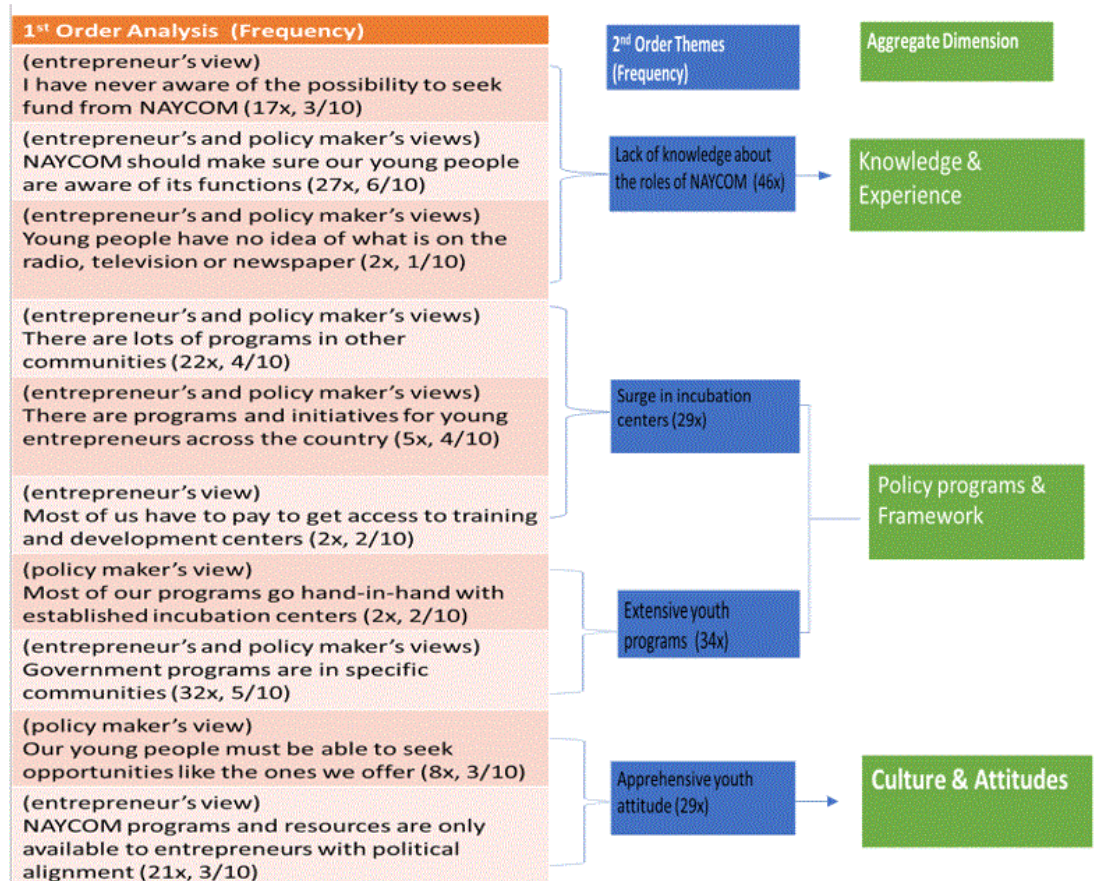
tion. The Gioia method is essential as “the data structure not only allows researchers to configure data into a sensible visual aid, but it also provides a graphic representation of how to progress from raw data to terms and themes in conducting the analyses—a key component of demonstrating rigor in qualitative research” (Gioia et al., 2013). To further articulate their stance, Gioia et al. echo’s, the Gioia method contains three main phases of analysis (1st Order Concepts, 2nd Order Themes, and Aggregate Dimensions) that allow researchers to produce a suitable data structure.

The 1st order analysis brings about several numbers of categories emerging from the front end of the initial coding. The 2nd order analysis focuses on the theoretical sphere and helps researchers to understand whether emerging themes from first-order analysis explain the phenomenon of academic interest by raising the level of abstraction. The aggregate dimension brings about the core general themes derived from the second-order analysis by swiftly linking categorized observations to theory. The practical processes are discussed in more detail below.

In practice, all the interviews were audio-recorded, and materials were transcribed immediately after each interview and throughout the interview process. Since the interviews were carried out in Krio, they were translated into English during February 2018, on an A5, 30 pages notebook.

Each translated data was then written down on an A4 word document and then coded manually by first highlighting parts of the responses that developed from the front end of the data and are embedded in the theoretical framework. Highlighted codes were then reflected upon to get a conceptualized view of the data and to understand whether arising comments and sentences from participants confer the themes embedded in the theoretical framework. While some other highlighted codes were discarded, relevant comments and sentences were then highlighted in bold to enable an immediate connection between observed codes, comments, and sentences. From emerging findings, an empirical review was then formed based on three formulated categories. The three formulated categories were then used to analyze this research and to further reflect on previous research in the field of entrepreneurship and entrepreneur-

ial growth. Below is an example of data coding in different phases of this research, using the Gioia method.



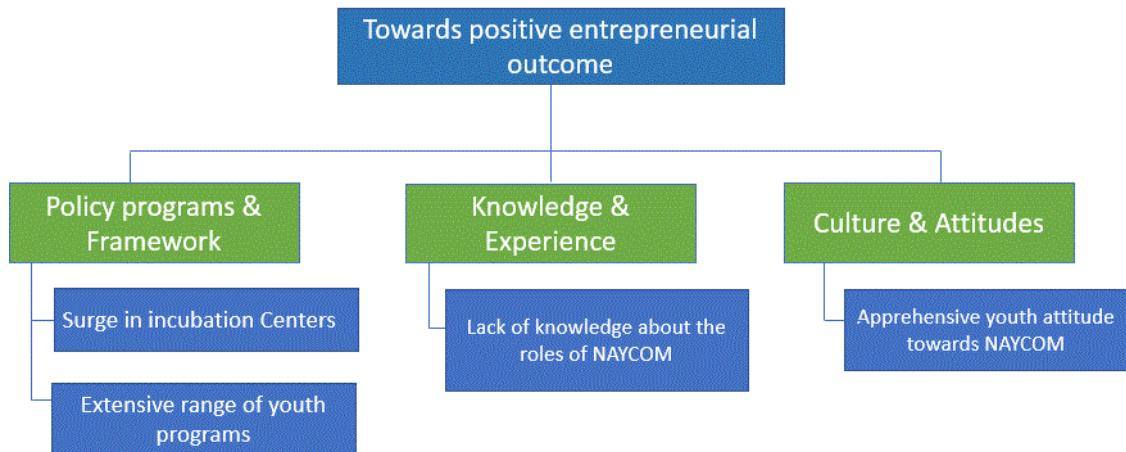
**Figure 6: An excerpt of data coding using the gioia method**

The Table above illustrates an excerpt from the initial codes and frequencies, arising themes and total frequencies, and the resulting total number of categories (3). The initial code frequencies were calculated based on the number of times each observed code appeared within the ten semi-interviews conducted. For instance, under the 1st order analysis, the issue of lack of awareness of the possibility to seek fund from NAYCOM appeared seventeen times in three interviews out of ten. Similarly, under the 2nd order theme of a surge in incubation centers, the total number of frequencies is 29. The observed initial codes (awareness of programs in other communities and the availability of programs and initiatives for young entrepreneurs across the coun-

try), appeared twenty-two and five times respectively, and so on. The following section will present the result of the interviews, and discussion of the empirical findings.

## 6 EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE

This section presents a coded summary of the interviews through thematization of interview transcripts, followed by critically appraising the findings and then explain and connect with the broader understanding of the leading theory. It combines the implications of the results with the main theoretical framework – state legitimacy.



**Figure 7: Unified codes and subcategories**

The Figure above depicts the main topic of this research (towards encouraging youth in entrepreneurship), the three subcategories and the final codes used in the analysis. As illustrated in the data analysis process, Figure 7 entails the unified codes and subcategories, wherein, the aggregate dimension includes policy programs and framework, knowledge and experience, and culture and attitudes. The 2nd order themes include a surge in incubation centers and an extensive range of youth programs, lack of knowledge about the roles of NAYCOM, and apprehensive youth attitude towards NAYCOM.

### 6.1 Policy programs and framework

This sub-section provides a detailed evaluation of the current state policy programs and framework in Sierra Leone, by swiftly examining participants responses. In order

to validate each response, this sub-section also uses direct quotations throughout the evaluation process.

#### 6.1.1 Surge in incubation centers

A general finding among participants from group 1, 2, and 3 is that there are an outpouring incubation and training centers intended to stimulate entrepreneurial activity and attitude. The Ministry of Youth Affairs and its Commission can be described as the lead authority that promotes young people creativity, as they initiate youth development programs in collaboration with relevant government and non-governmental bodies across the country. Since its establishment in 2009, the National Youth Commission Act continues to establish sub-regional training and development centers for young people across the country. In collaboration with non-governmental organizations such as CHILDFUND and HELP-Sierra Leone, NAYCOM has established centers in Bo, Freetown, Makeni, Kenema, and Koidu, to offered skills development and training support to 1,200 youths annually. Participants from SOBA acknowledged that the current surge in incubation centers are as a result of the growing need of Sierra Leone entrepreneurial sectors.

According to the lead communication advisory, SOBA, some business incubation centers – such as Impact Hub, Sensi Tech Hub, and Innovate have launched programs and initiatives aimed at providing technical tools, as well as research and development, and training and monitoring for young entrepreneurs across the country. The advisory Further added that two university-level programs – Freetown Business School and Limkokwing School of Creative Technologies are formed to improve entrepreneurial education in Freetown and produce international entrepreneurial mindset professionals. Also, the intervention lead analyst, SOBA pointed out that there is growing recognition for a network collaboration among colleges, business, and well-established professional associations. Participants from group 3 that recognize the current surge in incubation centers discussed some of the challenges.

According to the owner/CEO, AJC Aluminum Enterprise, there are no readily available incubation centers around Freetown, as innovative-minded youth are either rent-



ing stores or run their day-to-day business operations from home. He pointed out that:

*".... I have two young boys (entrepreneurs) with brilliant ideas who are working here for me. (--) They do not have a place (incubation center) to go. Instead, they use this location (AJC Aluminum Enterprise premise) for their business ideas sometimes..."* (Owner, AJC Ent., 2017.)

The scriptwriter/director, an owner, Generation Movie Production and owner, ABD Abdulrahman Bakery S.L, also share a common concern about the lack of accessibility to training and development centers in Freetown. The owner of Generation Movie Production says:

*"We are finding it hard and difficult to succeed in this country. I will like to have professional training in entrepreneurship skills, filming, and theatre play, but (incubation centers that offer training and education) it is too expensive. Luckily in my other job, I have friends from the UK that have in-depth knowledge about filming and theatre. So, they often helped whenever they are in Freetown. However, what about others (young entrepreneurs) that are not fortunate like me? (--) Unless we have a government that makes everything (incubation centers across Freetown) accessible to all of us, we will continue to struggle to develop skills and talents. In my case, if it is not for the passion and love for film and drama, I should have already stopped (writing and directing films)"* (Owner, Gen. Movie Prod., 2018.)

According to the owner of ABD Abdulrahman Bakery S.L, the establishment of incubation centers across the capital city of Freetown are strategical, as most of the centers are located in the western part of the city. The owner pointed about that:

*"...most of us have to pay to get access to these places (incubation centers) that we are paying for through taxation. Do they think this can help us to develop our (entrepreneurial) skills, and contribute to this economy? I do not think so"* (Owner, ABD Abdulrahman, 2017.)

Participants from the Sierra Leone Opportunity for Business Creation (SOBA), explained the reason for the disparity and challenges emerged even though there is an increasing number of training and development centers in the country. The Lead Communication Advisor, at SOBA, says:

*"There are training and development centers for our young people (entrepreneurs) in this country. For example, we have designed centers in the rural areas intended purposely (for our young people) to engage in agribusiness entrepreneurship. However, (the challenge is) our young people only want regular office work" (Lead Comm. Adv., 2018.)*

According to the Ministry of Youth Affairs and its Commission (NAYCOM), the disparity is due to lack of registered youth organizations and opportunity realization, as most young people in the country are failing to utilize the centers available to them. The Minister of Youth Affairs says:

*"... We do have wide ranges of training and development centers across critical areas. For example, in Aberdeen (Western area of Freetown), we have Sensi Innovation Hub (an open community space) oriented toward aspiring our young entrepreneurs and technologist to come together (to develop and implement business ideas). We have the National Swimming Pool center, Freetown (target - 200 youths), Obasanjo Centre, Newton Waterloo (target- 200 youths), Teko Road center, Makeni (target - 200 youths), Tikonko Road, Bo (Target- 200 youths), and Kenema center (target- 200 youths). However, the challenge is, we have fewer youth organizations registered with us (NAYCOM)....and the few identifiable young people (entrepreneurs), we facilitate equal access to training and development centers for all of them. (At the same time). We have also established and launched centers at Njala University and the University of Sierra Leone to offer services to educational institutions to increase the potential of university students to engage in university spin-off and entrepreneurship" (Minister of Youth Affairs, 2017.)*

The incongruities from young people indicate an interesting finding - as most of these young people, as well as participants from NAYCOM and SOBA, are aware of

the extensive range of youth programs across various communities in Freetown. There are several reasons for this interesting finding, and the following subsection will comprehensively justify some of these reasons.

#### 6.1.2 Extensive range of youth programs

Common knowledge for all three groups is that there is an extensive range of youth programs in the country. The Ministry of Youth Affairs and its Commission acknowledged that most of these youth programs are implemented in conjunction with youth incubation centers across the country. According to NAYCOM, youth programs across the country aim to provide employment opportunities and income generating activities for young people and to strengthen the capacity of the Ministry of Youth Affairs and the national youth commission. The Minister of Youth Affairs says:

*"...Most of our programs go hand-in-hand (in conjunction with established incubation centers). We have youth programs across six (6) areas: 1. Policy and Institutional Development 2. Youth Trade Skills Scheme 3. Youth Enterprise and Entrepreneurship Scheme 4. Youth Engagement in Agriculture 5. Public Works Scheme – Youth Workers Brigade: Waste Management, 6. Youth Participation, Sensitization and Advocacy Scheme, For example, we have (established) centers across eight (8) different communities in Freetown- Portee, Rokupa, Shell, Saroulla, Lumley, King Jimmy, Ginger Hall, and Wilberforce, (and) with our Crisis Entrepreneurship Project (CEP), we provide sixty (60) youth programs across these communities" (Minister, 2017.)*

According to participants from group 3, youth programs are available across Freetown. However, they contend that most of the youth programs are available in specific communities. The owner of ABD Abdulrahman Bakery S.L, Abdulrahman Deen Koroma pointed out that:

*"...Yes. I believe that there are (youth) programs existing – ones that are operating in other communities that are not here. They are not considering us here because they*

*said we are at the slums. (-- We are living in the slum, and they do not care about us. Any opportunity that arises, they consider those living in the most privileged areas (referring to those living in the western area of Freetown). We that are living in the slums, they do not care about us. (-- We are struggling here to develop. Even though we are hearing about them (referring to the availability of youth programs in other communities), they do not come here..." (Owner, ABD Abdulrahman, 2017.)*

Amidu Kamara, Owner, and CEO, AJC Aluminum Enterprises, and Ibrahim Rashid Kamara, director, and owner, Generation Movie Production also expressed frustration towards the inaccessibility of youth programs across their respective communities. Rashid Kamara pointed out that:

*"...Yes. I know that there are lots of programs in places like Magazine, Kroo Bay, anymore. Programs that are not coming down here in our community. (-- Maybe because most of the young people in our community cannot read or write. So, most of us cannot fight and seek equal support. Even though we have our entrepreneurial skills, talents and business operations".*

*"...It is a shame to our politicians and (especially) to those who implement youth programs in other communities. How is it possible that young people in neighboring communities like Aberdeen and Lumley have access to programs and we are finding it difficult to get a single program? (-- Few members of the society benefit from our state programs, while the majority of us struggle" (Owner/CEO, AJC Enterprises.)*

Participant from SOBA also expressed similar views on the availability of youth programs across the country. The Intervention Lead Analyst at SOBA contends that youth programs are widely spread across the country, to facilitate skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled youths' development. The analyst mentioned programs such as the Graduate Internship Programs (GIP) supported by UNDA – that aimed at improving employment opportunities for youth, and other civil societies and community-based organizations programs that aimed to nurture innovation and entrepreneurial culture are available for young people across the country.

## 6.2 Knowledge and experience

This sub-section provides a detailed evaluation of participants knowledge and experiences of the current state policy framework in Sierra Leone. This sub-section also entails some of the participant's direct quotations.

### 6.2.1 Lack of knowledge about the role of NAYCOM

Recurring views from all three groups is the lack of knowledge about the various functions of the Ministry of Youth Affairs and its Commission. Participants from SOBA identified the causes that contribute to this situation. The lead communication advisory, SOBA explained that young people (entrepreneurs) are only aware of getting financial support from the banks or through already established non-governmental organizations across the country in the form of microcredits finance. He pointed out that:

*"...Most of them (referring to entrepreneurs) are not aware that NAYCOM offers financial support, and also establish training and development centers across the country. Most of our young people believe that training and development centers in slum communities are established by NGOs" (Lead Comm. Adv., 2018.)*

The Intervention Lead Analyst, SOBA cautioned that young people are not only at fault for the lack of knowledge about the role of NAYCOM. He pointed out that the Ministry of Youth Affairs should make the role of NAYCOM known to young people across the country, especially among those living in the slum communities. The analyst emphasized that:

*"Most young people in the (slums) communities cannot read and write and most often they do not dare to visit Brookfield (referring to the headquarter of the Ministry of Youth Affairs and its Commission) and seek support. So, I believe the Ministry is also responsible for the lack of knowledge about NAYCOM". Most of our young people in these communities do not know that the Ministry of the Youth office is in Brookfield. It is a shame" (Intervention lead analyst, 2017.)*

Participants from group 3, also acknowledged that there are several reasons for the lack of knowledge about the role of the Ministry of Youth Affairs and its Commission to young people. The scriptwriter/director, owner, Generation Movie Production says:

*"...Most of the advertisements in this country are carried out via broadcast media and print newspapers. How can they (referring to state policy organization like NAYCOM) expect young people with no access to light (in their homes) and newspaper to understand what is in the news? Some of us are fortunate, but a majority of young people in this community that employ 20-30 people on a full-time basis, have no idea of what is on the radio, television or newspaper because they cannot comprehensively read and write".*

According to the owner, CEO, AJC Aluminum Enterprises, the lack of acknowledgment about the role of NAYCOM to young people is solely the fault of the Ministry of Youth Affairs and its Commission. It is because young people in the country have little or no knowledge about the functions of the youth commission. He reiterated that:

*"(-- If they (pointing at the two young entrepreneurs working for him) are aware of the role of NAYCOM, they should not be working here with me. However, the fact that they are not aware of how NAYCOM functions, that is why they are working here with me. In fact, until a few months ago, I never have aware of the possibility of seeking fund from the national youth commission".*

Participants from the Ministry of Youth Affairs and its Commission also recognized the lack of knowledge about the role of the youth commission. According to the Commission Communication Officer, the challenge facing the commission is how to reach young innovative minded youths who are uneducated – as a majority of these young entrepreneurs are not aware of the commission functions. The Minister of Youth Affairs also accepted the challenge to reach young entrepreneurial-minded youths across the country. According to the Minister of Youth Affairs, other (state), policy associations, such as district youth councils, youth steering committee, nation-

al youth advisory council, and civil society associations, must also play a crucial role to increase youth awareness about the various functions of the Ministry of Youth Affairs and its Commission. The Minister pointed out that the national youth advisory council and the youth steering committee that communicate and spread youth programs across communities must ensure that youths across the country are aware of the commission functions. The Minister also encourages young entrepreneurial-minded youth in the slum communities to "go-out the comfort zone" and seek support as taking risk is part of entrepreneurship.

### **6.3 Culture and attitudes**

This sub-section provides a detailed evaluation of the current culture and youth entrepreneurs attitude towards existing policy organization like NAYCOM. In order to validate each participant response, this sub-section also uses direct quotations throughout the process.

#### **6.3.1 Apprehensive youth attitude towards NAYCOM**

Participants also discussed NAYCOM challenges which are connected to young people attitude towards the youth commission and its associated associations. Participants from NAYCOM explained that the uneasy attitude of young entrepreneurial-minded youths create a challenge because the nature of entrepreneurship lacks among most young people in the country. According to the Minister of Youth Affairs, the internal locus of creative perception among young innovators concerning entrepreneurial activity and seeking business support is inadequate as young people are failing to take advantage of the resources available to them. The Minister indicated that Sierra Leone has young and brilliant innovators who are always committed to creating change but cautioned that:

*“Our young people must be able to seek opportunities like the ones we offer (referring to NAYCOM programs and other state policy programs). I encourage our young people to take on risks. The opportunities we offer are not only for those from the*

*university or technical colleges but for everyone. We seek the willingness to learn and develop”.*

Participants from group 3 also acknowledged their apprehensive attitudes towards the Ministry of Youth Affairs and its Commission. According to the owner, ABD Abdulrahman Bakery S.L, several reasons contribute to such an apprehensive attitude. The owner pointed out that, the country is a privileged country and govern solely based on influences and networks. He alluded that there is political favoritism when it comes to state policy programs and resources. The owner further described the reason for the apprehensive attitude towards the Ministry of Youth Affairs and its Commission.

*“NAYCOM programs and resources are only available to communities and entrepreneurs that they have political alignment. (For instance), if your community did not vote for the sitting government, you would likely get few or no government programs or support in your community. (-- ) Even though your idea, vision, or project is excellent, you will likely struggle to develop and succeed” (Owner, ABD Abdurrahman Bakery S.L).*

In articulating his reasons, the scriptwriter/director, owner, Generation Movie Production expressed his concern for the need for political connections at NYCOM. The owner alluded that one reason for the current youth attitudes towards NAYCOM is because young people see the idea of seeking support from the Ministry of Youth as a waste of time. The owner encouraged the next government to strive and create more awareness about governmental and non-governmental organizations programs that aim to encourage youth entrepreneurship across the country, as entrepreneurs are currently struggling due to a lack of political connections.

The owner, AJC Aluminum Enterprises also express similar reasons for the apprehensive attitude towards NAYCOM. He reiterated that unless the current entrepreneurial ecosystem is adjusted, young people with brilliant, innovative ideas will continue to avoid organizations like NAYCOM, because of partiality across certain youth groups and communities. The owner further mentioned that lack of support



from community councilors is also another reason for the apprehensive attitude towards NAYCOM, as in most cases, councilors are part of the government. The owner highlighted that:

*“.... Our counselor is from SLPP (the main opposition party), and every time we approach her for business support and growth, she will tell us there is no money... Make her argument that the ministry of youth affairs or parliament is not giving her money to invest in new business ideas but on community crisis and emergency. If our counselor cannot help us, how can we believe NAYCOM can help us?”.*

The Lead Communication Advisory, SOBA, also recognized the lack of apprehensive youth attitude towards NAYCOM. He denoted that the lack of awareness about the functions of NAYCOM is an influential factor in the current entrepreneurial attitudes towards the ministry and its related associations. He highlighted that there must be active awareness about the roles of NAYCOM to young entrepreneurs, as the commission must create reasons for entrepreneurs to change their attitude. The Intervention Lead Analyst also voiced those young entrepreneurs are averse to NAYCOM because even the small number of youths that are aware of the functions of NAYCOM are currently struggling to get an appointment with the Minister of Youth Affairs or the Youth Commissioner.

#### **6.4 Summary of the main findings**

In reverberating the empirical data, it is evident that there is a surge in incubation centers and extensive youth programs across Sierra Leone, as acknowledged by both youth entrepreneurs and policymakers in the country. Even though youth entrepreneurs are aware of the increasing incubation centers and entrepreneurship programs across strategic areas in the country, there is apprehensive youth attitude towards the state policy organization (NAYCOM). Perhaps this is due to the lack of knowledge about the various functions of NAYCOM and its related associations. Nevertheless, the findings of this study present a critical finding in the understanding of the state legitimacy and sustaining entrepreneurs' expectations and perceptions in Sierra Leone.

In an entrepreneurial ecosystem wherein, young people are passionate to engage in innovative activities; it is imperative to understand how it is possible that existing policy programs and projects are not easily attainable to all entrepreneurs in the country. While participants from NAYCOM try to substantiate that the current state policy framework towards entrepreneurial growth is legitimate, entrepreneurs and the Lead Communication Advisory, SOBA interpret the current state policy as non-legitimate for various reasons.

For instance, the Minister of Youth Affairs, NAYCOM draws upon various grounds to substantiate the activities and actions of NAYCOM and the state policy towards entrepreneurship. In doing so (see subsection 5.1.1), the Minister highlighted the amount of training and development centers established across critical areas and the total number of target youths within these areas. To further legitimize his stance (see subsection 5.1.2) the Minister reinforced that there are many youth programs across the country, and entrepreneurial programs and projects go ‘hand-in-hand’ with establishing incubation centers. As the Minister tries to legitimize the existing policy, entrepreneurs consider the current actions and activities to be strategic and influenced by a political commitment for various reasons.

For example, the owner of ABD Abdulrahman Bakery S.L (an entrepreneur) (see subsection 5.1.2), acknowledge that entrepreneurs across the country are aware of the existing programs in privileged communities. However, the owner also echoes that, policymaker’s commitments in critical areas mean that policy programs design to influence entrepreneurial growth across the country are not accessible to all communities and youth. Similarly, Rashid Kamara, owner, Generation Movie Production tries to substantiate (see subsection 5.1.2) why the current state policy is non-legitimate. The owner points out that maybe existing policy programs are not accessible to all communities, because most innovative and entrepreneurial-minded youth with skills and business operations cannot read or write. Consequently, instead of policymakers to legitimately ensuring that the state policy programs are accessible to all youths across the country, they focus on critical areas.

Theoretically, the lead authority actions and activities in Sierra Leone further substantiate that the current policy is non-legitimate. As Stillman (1974) echo, for actions and activities to be legitimate, existing policy programs and projects must be ‘compatible with’ the value pattern of the general society. Stillman asserted that ‘compatible with’ means existing economic inputs and resources must be accessible to the target group or society, and in reverting the responses from group 1 and 3 (see subsections, 5.1 and 5.2) it is noticeable that there is an existing legitimacy gap between participants from NAYCOM and entrepreneurs. Although, both the Minister of Youth Affairs and entrepreneurs tries to legitimize their various stances and viewpoints.

In reverting the Lead Communication Advisory, SOBA viewpoint (see subsection 5.2.1), it is also theoretically conceivable that the lack of knowledge about the functions of NAYCOM and its related associations substantiate that the current state policy that should nourish, promote, and support youth entrepreneurship growth in Sierra Leone is non-legitimate.

Seabrooke (2005) clarifies that one of the primary sources of non-legitimate actions is lack of disclosure between two actors, especially when unknown information becomes known to the other actor. Hence, in a situation wherein there is lack of awareness, the legalization strategy for maintaining legitimacy outlined by Tang (2017) will be challenging to accomplish because the general perceptions about the actions and activities derived from the existing policy will be interpreted as non-legitimate. Consequently, the availability of economic inputs and resources (like technology and infrastructure, venture capitalist), and favorable state policy (like less tax burden) will not lead to a favorable entrepreneurial outcome. Henceforth, a majority of the respondent’s echo (see Figure 6), NAYCOM should ensure that innovative youth across the country and in all communities are aware of its functions, in order to legitimize the organization actions and activities.

As this section has comprehensively presented the critical findings generated from the empirical data, the following section will discuss the key findings which are embedded in the main theoretical framework – adopted from O’Donovan (2002).

## 7 CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

This research has contributed significantly to the general theoretical perspective of state policy and entrepreneurial outcome. This section will discuss the implications of the results with the theoretical framework adapted from O'Donovan (2002) appropriate to understand how policymakers and youth entrepreneurs try to legitimize or non-legitimize existing state policy framework in Sierra Leone. Like many other developing economies in Sub-Saharan Africa, Sierra Leone is a youthful state with young innovative minded youth eager to engage in entrepreneurial activities. Hence, it is imperative to understand what influence entrepreneurial growth in Sierra Leone, and as mentioned in the background of this study, Hall and Sobel (2006) entrepreneurial outcome process are applied as a tool to structure the narrative of this study.

### 7.1 Key findings

The purpose of this study was to truly understand the legitimacy of the existing state policy framework in Sierra Leone and its implication on youth entrepreneurship growth. The goal was to understand whether state policy programs and projects in Sierra Leone meet entrepreneur's expectations.

Hence, the main research question in this study is:

***R.q. What are youth entrepreneur's legitimacy judgments about the entrepreneurial policy framework in Sierra Leone?***

In order to comprehensively answer the main research question, two sub-questions were provided:

***S.q 1. Are there any programs and projects in place to encourage youth entrepreneurship in Sierra Leone?***

***S.q 2. If there are programs in place, how feasible and easily attainable are these programs and projects to young people in the country?***

In order to answer these questions, qualitative research in the form of semi-structured interviews was conducted in Freetown, Sierra Leone between December 2017 to January 2018. Through this research method, the conceptual framework (see Figure 2) which evaluate state disclosure behavior and entrepreneurial expectations is comprehensively analyzed. Based on the empirical findings, I revisited Hall and Sobel (2006) conceptual framework and proposed suitable framework appropriate to influence entrepreneurial growth in developing economies. The two sub-questions and main research question are rigorously answered below.

***Are there any programs and projects in place to encourage youth entrepreneurship in Sierra Leone?***

This study has shown that there are wide ranges of entrepreneurship programs and projects established in Sierra Leone to influence entrepreneurial mindsets, attitudes, and skills among young people, as entrepreneurs in the country, are aware of the state policy programs and framework (see section 6.1.1 and 6.1.2). Despite the entrepreneur's awareness of policy programs and framework in the country, this study has also shown there are challenges to the feasibility and attainability of existing state policy programs and projects to young people across the country.

***How feasible and easily attainable are these programs and projects to young people in the country?***

In theory, (see Figure 1), the availability of economic inputs and resources, and favorable state policies can improve entrepreneurial growth as entrepreneurial outcomes depend primarily on public policies under which the entrepreneurial ecosystem operates (Hall and Sobel, 2006). The findings of this research have shown that it is not evident that the availability of economic inputs and resources, and favorable state policies can improve entrepreneurial growth across all states.

A key component of Hall and Sobel theoretical concept is the availability of entrepreneurial opportunities and creativity which are embedded in economic inputs and resources. Similar studies (see, e.g., Lerch et al., 2015; Burns, 2007; Holcombe,

2003; Dyer et al., 2008) have also found that creative and opportunity leads to successful entrepreneurial growth, as both concepts are embedding principles of entrepreneurship. Alternatively, this study has shown that entrepreneurs' creativity and ability to recognize opportunities are inefficacious if a legitimacy gap exists (see Figure 5). As Seabrooke (2005) echo, a legitimacy gap may occur if entrepreneurs' expectations change, even though existing state policy framework does not change.

Explicitly, the empirical evidence (see section 6.1.2) shows that entrepreneurs in Sierra Leone are aware of the extensive youth programs oriented towards encouraging youth entrepreneurship. However, their creativity and ability to spot current opportunities are not enough to boost their entrepreneurship, as they do not have access to the available opportunities and resources provided by NAYCOM and its related associations.

***What are youth entrepreneur's legitimacy judgments about the entrepreneurial policy framework in Sierra Leone?***

Despite the increasing awareness of existing entrepreneurial programs, projects, and incubation centers across Sierra Leone, the result of this study indicates youth entrepreneur's legitimacy judgment about the entrepreneurial policy framework in Sierra Leone as non-legitimate. Factors such a lack of attainability and accessibility to existing programs and projects, lack of awareness about the Youth Ministry and other youth organizations functions, policymaker's decision to establish youth programs in critical areas, and strong political commitment are core reasons for youth entrepreneurs' judgments. Since state legitimacy is based on society's expectations and perceptions (O'Donovan, 2002), it is evident that the perceived lack of accessibility to existing policy framework poses a challenge towards boosting entrepreneurship in Sierra Leone. Hence, I believe there are various measures policymakers in Sierra Leone can implement to tackle this worrying challenge.

Governmental and non-governmental organizations in the country must ensure economic inputs and resources, and the state policies are consistent with what the entrepreneurs expect and perceive. In order to accomplish this objective, policymakers

should provide greater awareness about the role of NAYCOM, civil society organizations, national youth policy steering committee, national youth advisory council, and the district youth councils and decentralized youth associations, to young innovators and entrepreneurs across the country. The main question here is: How can policymakers legitimately provide such greater awareness?

Policymakers should engage on community's sensitization activities to ensure entrepreneurs across the country aware of the functions of NAYCOM and its related associations. Such community's sensitization activities must be carried out in the local language, Krio. The reason is that, as highlighted by Statistics Sierra Leone, 44.2 percent of the country's population never attended school, the majority of whom are youth entrepreneurs (Statistic Sierra Leone, 2015). Presumably, such provision will comprehensively deal with the issues of apprehensive youth attitude and lack of knowledge about the responsibilities of NAYCOM and its related associations (see section 6.3.1; 6.2.1).

Empirically, this study has also shown that there are favorable policy programs and projects to encourage youth entrepreneurship, yet, the main question is: What needs to be done to ensure feasibility and attainability of the state policy programs to all enthusiastic entrepreneurs across the country?

In order to ensure a favorable intertwinement of the state policies and entrepreneurial outcome, the state must appoint non-partisan's civil servants to guide and lead youth's and community's development programs and projects across the country. The aim is to minimize any firm commitment or affiliations with certain youth groups or communities and allow programs and projects to be easily feasible and attainable to all young people. Since entrepreneurial opportunities are objective (Shane and Venkataraman, 2000), I do believe such intervention to appoint non-partisan's civil servants can significantly influence entrepreneur's commitment and willingness to take on risks and seek opportunities from NAYCOM and its related associations. Furthermore, since creativity, invention, and innovation are essential pillars of favorable entrepreneurial outlook (Dyer et al., 2008; Burns, 2007, p. 15), a non-partisan servant can promote and guide youth programs and projects and estab-

lish appropriate competition among young innovators and entrepreneurs. In short, a non-partisan will represent the youth's interest across the country.

Finally, decision-makers in Sierra Leone should authorize underlying institutional mechanisms and scales for effective policy delivery. For instance, the National Youth Advisory Council (see figure 5) that serves as the central meeting place for youth organizations, and a channel of communication for all youth-related government programs must ensure that every month, at least four new youth groups in Freetown are aware of the council meeting place for youth organizations. Through this channel, the National Youth Council will be able to communicate to youth organizations about the availability of incubation centers, how spread is the centers across the country, and provide information on how entrepreneurs can attain these incubation centers. In other to achieve this objective, the National Youth Advisory Council must collaborate with the National Youth Steering Committee that ensures that youth policy and programs are mainstream to young people across the country.

Subsequently, policymakers must ensure that the District Youth Councils and Decentralized Youth Associations in the urban areas offered necessary support to at least five youth groups once a year in each district. Since an understanding of the entrepreneurial process is best achieved by appropriate state policies framework, the government of Sierra Leone must ensure that existing policies programs are within an accessible range, thus, preventing value schizophrenia, value contradictions, and self-destruction (Stillman, 1974.) Given that the level of the entrepreneurial outcome in developing countries (like Sierra Leone) seems grounded in rigorous awareness creation, Hall and Sobel (2006) entrepreneurial outcome process (see figure 1), which indicate that the availability of economic inputs and resources, and favorable state policies can improve entrepreneurial outcome does not hold across most developing economies.

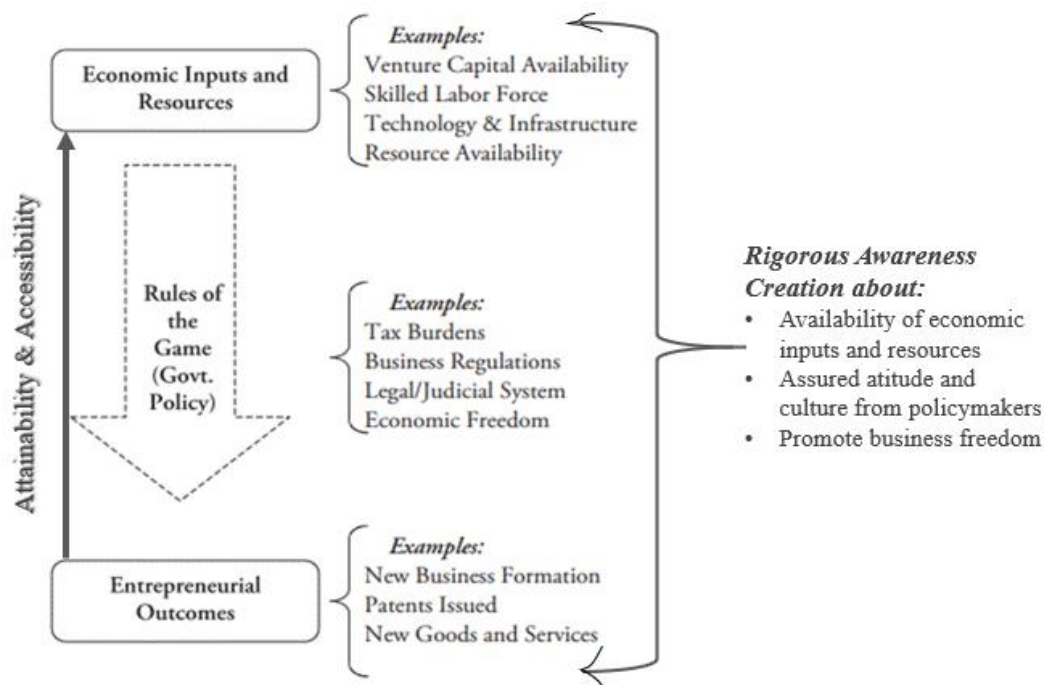
## **7.2 Academic contribution**

Shane and Venkatraman (2000) have criticized that, 'opportunity recognition is a subjective process.' Therefore, my contribution is that neither the availability of eco-



conomic resources nor favorable state policy framework are sufficient to motivate youth toward entrepreneurship in developing economies. Instead, I propose that state policy must be compatible with the entrepreneur's expectations, and rigorous awareness creation is essential to influence the entrepreneurial outcome.

Therefore, it is desirable, as illustrated in Figure 8, for academic researchers in the field of entrepreneurship and management to consider two key aspects: rigorous awareness creation, and attainability in evaluating entrepreneurial outcome in developing economies.



**Figure 8: Proposed Entrepreneurial Outcome Process Model (adapted from Hall and Sobel, 2006)**

The importance of rigorous awareness creation, attainability, and accessibility for entrepreneurial growth in developing economies are now well established. The findings of this research suggest a significant linkage between state policy framework, legitimacy, and entrepreneurial outcome.

For instance, rigorous awareness creation is an essential mechanism in order to increase the legitimacy of state policy programs among young entrepreneurs. It involves the ability of lead policymakers to create a specific campaign about existing resources (like the availability of venture capitalist, technology and infrastructure), and state policy (like business regulations). The aim is to increase entrepreneurial knowledge about existing availabilities, thus, change the lack of knowledge and apprehensive attitude among entrepreneurs regarding existing resources. Since awareness creation cannot independently influence entrepreneurial growth, it will increase the entrepreneur's expectations and perceptions about state policy actions and activities, as proposed by O'Donovan (2002).

Similarly, existing entrepreneurial resources (such as financial resources, technological resources, and capabilities) and state policy framework must be compatible with entrepreneur's expectations, in order to maintain the legitimacy of the state policy framework actions and activities.

As this literature review shows, these two aspects (rigorous awareness creation, and attainability and accessibility) are essential to maintain state legitimacy, because in developing economies like Sierra Leone, they are fundamental to encourage youth entrepreneurship and outcome. Unlike Hall and Sobel (2006) entrepreneurial outcome process, my contribution will boost youth entrepreneurship in developing economies, brings about greater awareness about state policy framework, and strengthen the legitimacy of state policy actions and activities.

Based on the simple realization, academic researchers in the field of entrepreneurship, management and organization must take into consideration environment uncertainties and growth of opportunities in evaluating entrepreneurial outcome across developing economies. The findings of this research have shown the practical implication as to why achieving entrepreneurial growth is a challenge in developing economies.

In the case of Sierra Leone, it is likely that one key reason is the strong political commitment by lead policymakers that promote youth creativity and establish entre-

preneurial programs across the country. As a Sierra Leonean, I am aware of the effect of political alignment in the country, as in most cases, policymakers visit communities and youth groups to seek their vote, in exchange for community development, and youth programs and projects. Once in power, they only seek to support the communities and youth groups that elect them. Could this be one reason why policy programs and projects are not accessible to all communities? It is possible that this could be one of the reasons why do entrepreneurial programs and projects are available to special youth groups and communities as recognized by entrepreneurs in Freetown. Conversely, other reasons could be due to the current apprehensive youth attitude towards NAYCOM and its related associations, as entrepreneurs are reluctant to seek support from the Ministry of Youth Affairs and its associated associations (see section 6.3.1). Other reason could be due to the lack of acknowledgment about the roles of NAYCOM and its allied associations (see section 6.3.1).

Previous studies (see, e.g., Hall and Sobel, 2006; Lalkaka, 2001; Gnyawali and Fogel, 1994) have also found that the establishment of entrepreneurship centers helps to promote entrepreneurial attitudes and skills, as it encourages individuals to act entrepreneurially. The findings of this study have shown that the establishment of entrepreneurship incubation centers does not necessarily promote an entrepreneurial mindset if the incubation centers are not easily attainable or accessible to entrepreneurs as Stillman (1974) found that inputs and resources (such as established entrepreneurial centers) must be within an available range to the existing society.

The Minister of Youth Affairs expressed in detail the availability of entrepreneurial training and development centers across the country (see section 6.1.1 and 6.1.2). Despite his legitimate stance, one would like to ask: Why existing incubation centers are not accessible to all young people in the country? The Minister of Youth Affairs mentioned that a possible reason could be lack of opportunity recognition, as entrepreneurs are failing to utilize the incubation centers across the country. If presumably, this is the reason, could it be due to a lack of awareness creation about the functions of NAYCOM and its associated associations? Evident, this study has shown that entrepreneurs in the country would like to attend to training and education programs, but as recognized by the owner of Generation Movie Production (see section

6.1.1): “training and development programs offered in incubation centers are too expensive. (--)”.

The following sub-section will evaluate the reliability and validity of this study. It is evident that without rigor, qualitative research loses its efficiency and worthiness. For this reason, academic researchers continue to emphasize that reliability and validity are essential principles of the scientific method, as they strengthen the unique contribution to knowledge development (Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson and Spiers 2002).

### **7.3 Assessment of reliability and validity**

Irrespective of incongruence between quantitative and qualitative approaches, reliability and validity, are recognized standards for rigor and legitimacy of qualitative research. Therefore, the explanations of reliability and validity are dependable standards by which the quality of all research are assessed continuously (Whittemore, Chase and Mandle, 2001.) Before an integrated conceptual explanation of the reliability and validity of this study, the two terms are defined below.

There is a consensus among scientific scholars and researchers on the definition of reliability and validity. Brink (1993) states that reliability is concerned with the consistency, stability, and repeatability of the qualitative research and the ability to accurately collect and record information. In supporting Brink's definition, Taherdoost (2016) echo's, reliability is involved with repeatability: as it examines the research phenomenon and the extent to which if repeated, yield consistently the same results. Golafshani (2003) further highlights that reliability is concerned with the ability to test and evaluate the qualitative study. Golafshani further maintains that the most critical test in a qualitative study is its quality, and the concept of good quality in a qualitative study is to generate understanding, which is a consequence of validity.

According to Whittemore et al. (2001), the process of forming a concept of validity in qualitative research is shown through core criteria's – primary criteria, secondary criteria, and techniques. Factors such as authenticity, criticality, and integrity refer to

as primary criteria, whereas explicitness, vividness, creativity, thoroughness, congruence, and sensitivity are considered secondary criteria. To further articulate their stance, Whitemore et al. highlight that primary criteria are essential to all qualitative analysis; but acknowledged, they are insufficient to provide rigor in qualitative research. For this reason, secondary criteria are necessary to provide further benchmarks of quality and are more flexible as applied to qualitative research (Whitemore et al., 2001.) Indeed, the issue of credibility and validity in qualitative research depends on the construction of the researcher.

In reverberating Cohen et al. (2007, p.50) stance, Alshenqeeti (2014) echo several factors may help interviewers to ensure higher validity in qualitative research by minimizing bias. For instance, 1) “A tendency for the interviewer to see the interviewee on own merits. 2) The attitude, views, and prospects of the interviewer. 3) A tendency for interviewers to seek answers to support their preconceived notions. 4) Misperceptions on the part of the interviewer about what the interviewee is saying. 5) Misunderstanding on the part of the interviewee concerning what is being asked” (Alshenqeeti, 2014.) Furthermore, to ensure reliability – “interviewers must: avoid asking leading questions; taking notes not just depending on tape recorders; conducting a pilot interview; and allow the interviewee a chance, to sum up, and clarify the points they have made” (Alshenqeeti, 2014.) In fact, throughout this research, the issue of credibility and validity arises, as the initial goal of this study continuously align with the arising conceptual framework questions and in line with examining the legitimacy of state policy and entrepreneurial outlook in Sierra Leone

The reliability of this research is evaluated through clear, accurate, and transparent method description of the study. While the methodological choices of this research are explained comprehensively in the methodology section, before deciding on the research topic (entrepreneurship), flexible discussions and different choices were examined.

For instance, before a final choice on the topic, discussions were held with a professor of international entrepreneurship at the University of Oulu about the desire and interest to study entrepreneurship in more depth. During the discussions, recommen-

dations were made about the nature of entrepreneurship as a field of research, as well as possible areas of study. After identifying entrepreneurship as a focus topic, a brief telephone conversation was carried out on October 2017 with the Minister of Youth Affairs in Sierra Leone, about the state of entrepreneurship in the country. During the conversation with the Minister of Youth Affairs, a focus area of study (youth entrepreneurship) was identified, and the choice of the study area (Sierra Leone) was based on own vast knowledge about this area and my ability to gather relevant materials necessary to produce a well-in-depth and viable study. The initial aim was to study the motivational aspects of youth in entrepreneurship but purposefully decided to investigate the current state policy aim at encouraging youth in entrepreneurship, due to the inability to identify a suitable research gap. Eventually, there was a consensus with the Minister, before embarking on gathering relevant theoretical materials. Moreover, the analysis and content process of the various interviews have been explained in the methodological section so that it is easy for the reader to follow and understand the various choices concerning this research data collection method, procedures, and design.

The dimensions of the validity of this research can be evaluated based on the accuracy of data concerning research goal, consistency with the theoretical concepts, and policy implication made. The purpose of this study was to truly understand the legitimacy of the existing state policy framework and its implication on the entrepreneurial outcome. Hence, the interview questions designed to achieve this research purpose were carefully planned after a comprehensive review of materials retrieved from the University of Oulu library, Oulu city library, as well as specific lectures materials and online google scholars search platform. While the total number of participants (10) might limit the generalization of this research findings, it also enhances the validity of this research, as participants were identified explicitly due to their vast individual experience and organizational know-how about the current state policy and entrepreneurial outlook in Sierra Leone.

In fact, due to participants tight schedules, all of the interviews were carried out on a flexible schedule to meet the requirement of each participant. As Alshenqeti (2014) states, a crucial aspect to increase qualitative research validity is to ensure the inter-

view takes place during the interviewee own time and not on the interviewer own suitable schedule.

#### **7.4 Limitations and suggestion for future research**

Although the issue of reliability and validity are comprehensively evaluated in this study, the results of this research have to be seen in consideration of some limitations. Some of these limitations include the issue with participants sample and their geographical area, the issue of participants objectivity and detachment, lack of formation in narrowing the research aims and objectives, and limited scope of discussion.

The total number of participants ten (10), of which six (6) are devoted youth entrepreneurs all of which are residing in the capital city of Sierra Leone, Freetown, does not reflect the views of all youth entrepreneurs across the twelve districts of Sierra Leone. These participants, especially the youth entrepreneurs are therefore imperiled to bias and confounding that may have influenced this research results. However, to validate the effect this issue might cause, the entrepreneurs were chosen based on criterion-based sampling. For instance, all participants have a minimum of ten (10) experience as youth entrepreneurs; all the participants have at least a secondary school qualification, and three (3) out of the six (6) entrepreneurs are rural entrepreneurs who are currently residing in Freetown, Sierra Leone. Similarly, as this research depends significantly on an individual's objective opinion, there is a tendency of high objectivity.

Therefore, to increase the validity of this research, participants were encouraged to respond freely to pre-planned questions and contribute openly towards the understanding of the current state policy and entrepreneurial outlook in the country. The issue of lack of formation in narrowing the research aims and objectives arise from the difficulty in deciding whether to use legitimacy theory alone or swiftly link it with an entrepreneurial conceptual framework as carried out throughout this research. Consequently, there is a lack of scope in the discussion.

In order to overcome some of these limitations, future research could examine a large sample of participants (especially among youth entrepreneurs) across the majority of the twelve (12) districts in Sierra Leone. The advantage of using a large sample is to increase the accuracy of data and better understand whether the responses reflect the general perspective of young entrepreneurs across the country. However, the disadvantage of using a large sample in developing economies like Sierra Leone is inadequate knowledge in the subject, as the majority of young innovative minded youth lacks specialized knowledge to contribute openly on state policy and entrepreneurial outlook.

All in all, this study result shows that the linkage between state policy and entrepreneurial outlook in developing economies is an essential area of study. Hence, future research is commended to comprehensively understand the legitimacy of the state policy framework and its implication on youth entrepreneurial growth in developing economies.



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