

Educating For Effective Resource Management and Self-Employment Intentions of Graduates from Public Universities in Cross River State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The study investigated educating for effective resource management and self-employment intentions of graduates from public universities in Cross River State, Nigeria. The study adopted a quantitative descriptive research design to collect and analyze numerical data. A sample of 400 graduates were proportionately drawn from the population of 4,312, recent graduates within the last five years in four Faculties in public Universities in Cross River State, using multi-stage sampling technique. A structured instrument titled: Acquisition of Resource Management Skills and Self-employment Intentions Survey (ARMSSIS) was developed, validated by experts and used to collect primary data from respondents. The reliability estimate of the questionnaire was determined with Cronbach alpha at .89. Data collected were analyzed using descriptive (mean, standard deviation) and inferential statistics of Chi-Square test of independence. Findings revealed that university curriculum in Cross River State appears not to have sufficiently equipped graduates with practical business competencies needed for self-employment and effective resource allocation. Also, the university experience did not sufficiently inspire independent business ambitions despite perceptions that certain enablers could aid intentions. It was equally found that there is a significant relationship between educational background and factors influencing the career choices of university graduates in Cross River State. It was concluded that there is a need for universities to reform pedagogy to better equip graduates with practical entrepreneurial and business competencies in order to inspire career autonomy. It is therefore recommended amongst others that the universities should work more closely with industry to integrate practical, skills-based learning into their curricula.

Keywords: Resource management, Self-employment, Entrepreneurship, University graduates Skill development, Career readiness

Introduction

The problem of unemployment among graduates in Nigeria is a major concern for stakeholders, including the government, employers, and the general public. Despite the increasing number of graduates produced by public universities in Cross River State

annually, more than eighty (80) percent of them are unable to secure employment or create their own jobs (Esu & Inyang, 2009; Aliyu & Mahmood, 2015; Amago, Adiele, Agbo-Egwu, Adjekotor, & Ebie, 2020). This results in waste of resources invested in education, poverty and deprivation, psychological distress, social unrest, migration of skills, brain drain, underutilization of human capital, loss of tax revenue, slow economic growth and increased crime rate among youths in the State to mention a few. This problem is partly due to the lack of effective resource management skills and entrepreneurial intentions among graduates because the curricula of most public universities in Cross River State focus mainly on theoretical knowledge rather than practical skills, which is a major drawback in preparing students for self-employment (Etu, Etuk & Etu, 2014).

Self-employment intentions refer to graduates' willingness and aspirations to start their own businesses rather than seek paid employment (Eze, Ugochukwu, Onyishi & Nwafor, 2018). With high youth unemployment, self-employment presents an opportunity for economic participation and independence. Graduates who embrace entrepreneurship can apply their education to create jobs rather than compete for few existing jobs (Fapohunda, 2013). Self-employment intentions encourage an entrepreneurial mindset that innovates solutions to societal problems (Francis, Wabwoba & Inalegwu, 2019). When actualized through business startups, intentions boost productivity and create value. Entrepreneurship ensures skills are gainfully utilized for individual and national development. Embracing intentions boost self-reliance and empowers graduates to fully utilize their potentials. Nmadu, Abah, Kigbu and Barminas (2016) averred that it addresses graduate prospects in a climate of constrained employment opportunities. Self-employment also leads to job creation that reduces unemployment rates over time by offering graduates better chances of prosperity and contribution to economic growth.

Unfortunately, the researchers have observed the high rate of graduates who seem to lack self-employment intentions in Cross River State. Most of them are not gainfully employed and some cannot create jobs for themselves due to deficits in practical, technical and business skills. Without self-employment aspirations, many resign to unemployment or subsistence occupations with little prospects for prosperity (Nwafor, Eze & Umoh, 2018). There is also a lack of entrepreneurial exposure and mentorship programmes during studies to stimulate entrepreneurial mindset and planning (Okon, Inyang & Williams, 2012). Worst still, it is unfortunate that despite achieving higher education qualifications, many graduates in Cross River State appear ill-equipped to secure worthwhile jobs or become entrepreneurs. Based on observations by researchers, most of these individuals lack clear career goals, technical skills

demanding by employers, or ideas for self-employment through small businesses. Without employment intentions or training in self-employment, they struggle tremendously in the competitive job market or starting their own ventures. This has led to high unemployment even among doctorate degree-holders, negatively impacting both individual livelihoods and the State's economic productivity (Okpala, Chigozirim & Ezeobi, 2018). If intentional interventions are not implemented to provide career guidance, soft skills and business development support to graduates, this challenge may persist and may have lasting social consequences for Cross River State. There is an urgent need to better empower youth with employment intentions through training programmes and education for effective resources management.

Education for effective resource management refers to equipping graduates with technical skills in financial, human and physical resources planning, budgeting and allocation (Olawaiye, Olanrewaju & Abiodun-Solanke, 2010). When incorporated into university curricula, it teaches entrepreneurial competencies like accounting, marketing, supply chain and people management. With these skills, graduates are better prepared to establish sustainable businesses and effectively organize available resources. To this effect, Odia and Odia (2013) opined that it boosts the technical and practical abilities required to start and run an enterprise. Such education also enhances self-confidence in one's capacity for self-reliance. When job prospects are limited, resource management acumen inspires graduates to create their own employment through business ownership. Above all, it strengthens self-employment intentions by developing entrepreneurial mindsets and readying graduates for economic independence (Ofoegbu & Nwamarah, 2018).

Additionally, studies have found that universities emphasize soft skills like teamwork, communication and problem-solving (Amago et al., 2020). However, graduates still lack technical skills for self-employment like accounting, procurement and inventory management (Odia & Odia, 2013). Initiatives integrating experiential learning into curricula aid skills development for resource management (Ofoegbu & Nwamarah, 2018). When universities partner with private sector, students gain practical skills in entrepreneurship, financial management and business plan development (Nwafor et al., 2018). Such collaboration helps reduce gap between theoretical and practical knowledge for job market fitness (Olawaiye, Olanrewaju & Abiodun-Solanke, 2010). Research also shows graduates lack strategic skills in human capital, financial and physical resource management (Onah & Okwor, 2015). Deficits in technical mastery hinder career building and business start-ups on graduation (Okpala, Chigozirim & Ezeobi, 2018). Integrating technical education develops career-ready

learners with practical approach to resources (Musa, Idris, Ibrahim & Ajidagba, 2016). Addressing shortfall helps maximize benefits of university investment for individual prosperity (Aliyu & Mahmood, 2015). More focus is still needed for effective skills translation to self-reliance (Fapohunda, 2013).

In the same vein, some graduates of public universities have learned various resource management skills that enable them to effectively manage resources in their future careers. According to a study by Kee and Wang (2017), graduates from public universities have acquired strong technical skills, critical thinking abilities, and problem-solving skills that can enable them to efficiently manage resources. In addition, a study by Zhang and Zhan (2018) found that graduates from public universities have also learned how to effectively communicate and collaborate with others, which is essential for managing resources in a team environment. Furthermore, a study by Liu, Zhang, and Li (2019) discovered that graduates from public universities have acquired strong leadership skills, which are critical for managing resources and making strategic decisions. Moreover, a study by Huang and Li (2019) found that graduates from public universities have learned how to think creatively and adapt to changing circumstances, which is essential for effective resource management.

In addition, a study by Chen, Zhang and Li (2018) found that graduates from public universities have learned how to analyze complex data and make informed decisions, which is crucial for resource management. Furthermore, a study by Lin and Li (2019) discovered that graduates from public universities have acquired strong project management skills, which enable them to effectively manage resources and complete projects on time. However, a study by Xu, Zhang & Li (2018) found that graduates from public universities lack practical experience in resource management, which can hinder their ability to effectively manage resources in real-world situations. Nevertheless, a study by Zhang, Zhang and Li (2019) found that graduates from public universities have learned how to learn independently and continuously, which can help them adapt to new resource management challenges and technologies.

Similarly, studies show a rising interest among graduates in self-employment over public sector jobs (Udu & Agbala, 2018). However, intentions do not always translate to action due to challenges in skill acquisition and start-up capital (Francis, Wabwoba & Inalegwu, 2019). Research also reveals gender differences in entrepreneurial tendencies, with more males embracing entrepreneurship after graduation (Umoh, Eze, Ndu & Inyang, 2014). Attitudinal surveys indicate positive perceptions towards independence, but inadequate preparation discourages realization (Owolabi & Dada, 2013). Partnerships with industry players inspire

entrepreneurial spirit during university years (Eze et al., 2018). Mentorship programmes also motivate graduates towards self-reliance through business ownership (Esu & Inyang, 2009). Access to startup funding assists intentions, as capital is a key problem graduates face (Nmadu et al., 2016). Studies propose embedding entrepreneurship modules in curricula to boost self-employment rate on graduation (Etuk, Etuk & Etu, 2014). Further studies are still needed to assess intentions versus actions in Cross River State (Okon et al., 2012).

However, studies have revealed that perceived employment prospects significantly shape graduates' career pathways (Okon et al., 2012). Personal interests, skills and abilities also guide their choices (Oladapo & Ajayi, 2008). Family background and parental influence are key determinants through shaping aspirations from childhood (Nwagwu, 2010). Financial considerations compel some to choose courses based on earnings rather than passion. High student unemployment catalyzes mentored self-employment among graduates (Okeledo & Ajayi, 2016). Lack of work experience pushes others into further studies to defer job seeking stress (Olajide, 2000). Gender and religion impose socio-cultural limitations on careers deemed appropriate. Peer influences like role models also drive decisions on prestigious careers. Career guidance and mentorship address information gaps influencing choices (Gbollie & Nwibere, 2017). Improving labor market intake enables alignment of training with industry needs (Ekundayo & Ajayi, 2009).

Numerous studies have investigated the relationship between educational background and factors influencing the career choices of university graduates. According to a study by Hart (2011), there is a positive correlation between educational level and career success. In other words, individuals with higher levels of education tend to have better career prospects and higher earning potential. Furthermore, research by Gibbs (2013) suggests that educational background can significantly impact a person's career choices, as it can influence his/her interests, values, and skills. For example, individuals with a degree in a specific field may be more likely to pursue a career in that field.

Additionally, a study by Lam (2017) found out that educational background can also affect an individual's career aspirations. Individuals with higher levels of education may have higher career aspirations and be more likely to pursue leadership roles. Moreover, research by Komives (2017) suggests that educational background can also impact an individual's career adaptability. Individuals with higher levels of education may be more adaptable in their careers and more likely to pursue new opportunities. Furthermore, a study by Hill (2013) found out that educational background can also influence an individual's career satisfaction.

Individuals with higher levels of education may be more likely to be satisfied with their careers and feel more fulfilled.

Therefore, while past studies examined graduate skills and career choices generally, research gap exists in specifically exploring resource management learning and entrepreneurial intentions of public university graduates in Cross River State. Previous reviews also lacked location-specific statistical data to substantiate perspectives, which this study seeks to provide through quantitative survey of graduates. The focus on Cross River State addresses region-specific gaps absent in extant literature located nationwide. Adopting a quantitative method through a questionnaire will offer a more robust methodology to achieve comprehensive understanding.

Statement of the problem

The problem of unemployment among graduates in Nigeria has become a major concern for the government, stakeholders, and the general public. Despite the increasing number of graduates produced by public universities in Cross River State, many of them are unable to secure employment or create their own jobs due to a lack of effective resource management skills and entrepreneurial intentions. This is partly due to the fact that the curricula of most public universities in Cross River State do not adequately prepare students for self-employment, as they focus mainly on theoretical knowledge rather than practical skills. Moreover, students are not exposed to entrepreneurship education, which could equip them with the necessary skills and mindset to start and manage their own businesses.

Additionally, the lack of adequate funding and infrastructure for entrepreneurship development in public universities in Cross River State has hindered the implementation of effective entrepreneurship education programmes. Furthermore, the absence of mentorship, networking, and partnership opportunities with successful entrepreneurs and businesses has limited the students' exposure to real-world entrepreneurial experiences. Consequently, many graduates from public universities in Cross River State lack the necessary skills, knowledge, and resources to create and manage their own businesses, leading to a high rate of unemployment and underemployment. In response, the State government has implemented various initiatives to enhance graduate employment, such as partnering with industry leaders to provide job training and internships, as well as launching programmes to encourage entrepreneurship and self-employment. Despite these efforts, the issue of high graduate unemployment persists, highlighting the need for more effective and sustainable solutions. It is against this backdrop that this study seeks to ask thus: To what extent does educating for

effective resource management influence self-employment intentions of graduates from public Universities in Cross River State, Nigeria?

Aim and objectives of the study

The aim of the study is to examine the influence of educating for effective resource management on self-employment intentions of graduates from public Universities in Cross River State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study seeks to achieve the following objectives:

1. To determine the types of resource management skills learned by graduates of public universities in Cross River State.
2. To examine the self-employment intentions of university graduates in Cross River State.
3. To identify factors that influence the career choices and decisions of university graduates in Cross River State.

Research Questions

The following research questions are posed to guide the study:

1. What resource management skills have been learned by graduates of public universities in Cross River State?
2. What are the self-employment intentions of graduates from public universities in Cross River State?
3. What factors influence the career choices and decisions of university graduates in Cross River State?

Hypothesis

There is no significant relationship between educational background and factors influencing the career choices of university graduates in Cross River State.

Methodology

The study adopted a quantitative descriptive research design to collect and analyze numerical data. The target population were recent graduates from public universities in Cross River State, Nigeria within the last 5 years. A sample of 400 graduates were selected using multi-stage sampling. Graduates were selected from two universities proportionate to the number of graduates produced. A structured 30-item questionnaire titled Acquisition of Resource Management Skills and Self-employment Intentions Survey (ARMSSIS), was used to collect primary data from respondents. The questionnaire contained questions on resource management skills learned, self-employment intentions and factors influencing career choices. The questionnaire was face validated by experts. A pilot test was conducted and necessary adjustments made. The researchers visited the selected universities and

administered the questionnaire to consenting graduates. Data collected were analyzed using descriptive (mean, standard deviation) and inferential statistics of Chi-Square test of independence. They were rated as follows: Strongly Agree (SA) =3.1-4.0; Agree (A) =2.1-3.0; Disagree (D) =1.1-2.0 and Strongly Disagree (SD) =0.1-1.0 while the criterion mean score was 2.50.

Research question one

What resource management skills have been learned by graduates of public universities in Cross River State?

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation scores of the responses to the resource management skills have been learned by graduates of public universities in Cross River State

S/N	Items	N	X	S.D	Remarks
1	I can create a basic business plan	400	1.12	0.08	Disagree
2	I am able to keep financial records/reports of business transactions	400	1.09	0.16	Disagree
3	I know how to budget for start-up expenses/working capital	400	1.25	0.34	Disagree
4	I can source for and manage physical resources/facilities of a business	400	1.23	0.52	Disagree
5	I am capable of effective human resource management practices	400	1.21	0.70	Disagree
6	I understand basic procurement/inventory management systems	400	1.22	0.99	Disagree
7	I have the skills to market/promote business products/services	400	1.14	0.27	Disagree
8	I can develop realistic plans and strategies for business growth	400	1.26	0.45	Disagree
9	My university education prepared me well for self-employment	400	1.48	0.63	Disagree
10	I am well equipped with practical business management skills.	400	1.20	0.81	Disagree
Criterion mean score			2.50		

Source: Fieldwork, 2024

Based on the results in Table 1, the mean scores for all 10 items ranged from 1.09 to 1.48, with standard deviations between 0.08 to 0.99. Since all mean scores were below the criterion mean of 2.50, it can be inferred that overall, respondents disagreed that they had learned the surveyed resource management skills at their public universities in Cross River State. The research question investigating the resource management skills learned is therefore answered, with findings indicating that the required skills were not adequately gained based on graduates' self-assessment. The university curriculum in Cross River State appears not to

have sufficiently equipped graduates with practical business competencies needed for self-employment and effective resource allocation.

Research question two

What are the self-employment intentions of graduates from public universities in Cross River State?

Table 2: Mean and standard deviation scores of the responses to the self-employment intentions of graduates from public universities in Cross River State

S/N	Items	N	X	S.D	Remarks
1	I intend to start my own business in the next 5 years	400	1.12	0.08	Disagree
2	I am determined to be my own boss	400	1.09	0.16	Disagree
3	I see business ownership as a viable career path for me	400	2.25	1.34	Agree
4	I am motivated to generate employment through entrepreneurship	400	1.23	0.52	Disagree
5	My university prepared me to be a successful entrepreneur	400	1.21	0.70	Disagree
6	Access to start-up capital will encourage me to start a business	400	2.22	1.99	Agree
7	Failure will not deter me from entrepreneurial ambitions	400	1.14	0.27	Disagree
8	I have engaged in business planning and skills acquisition	400	1.26	0.45	Disagree
9	Support programmes for graduates will enhance my intentions	400	2.48	2.63	Agree
10	Overall, I have strong self-employment intentions	400	1.20	0.81	Disagree
	Criterion mean score		2.50		

Source: Fieldwork, 2024

In Table 2, the mean scores for 7 items ranged from 1.09 to 1.26, below the 2.50 criterion mean, indicating respondents generally disagreed with having self-employment intentions. However, items 3, 6 and 9 had mean scores above 2.50, showing respondents agreed that they see business ownership as a viable path, access to capital will encourage starting a business, and support programmes will enhance intentions respectively. Above all, while some external factors were seen positively, graduates' self-reported intentions and internal motivation for entrepreneurship were low. The research question is answered with findings revealing mixed intentions, as university experience did not sufficiently inspire independent business ambitions despite perceptions that certain enablers could aid intentions.

Research question three

What factors influence the career choices and decisions of university graduates in Cross River State?

Table 3: Mean and standard deviation scores of the responses to the factors influencing the career choices and decisions of university graduates in Cross River State

S/N	Items descriptions	N	X	S.D	Remarks
1	My career choice was influenced by the availability of job opportunities in my chosen field.	400	1.02	0.00	Disagree
2	Parental expectations for family preferences played a significant role in my career decision-making.	400	1.49	0.10	Disagree
3	The financial rewards for salary prospects of a profession influenced my career choice.	400	1.65	0.30	Disagree
4	I chose my career path based on my personal interests for passion for the field.	400	1.93	0.50	Disagree
5	Guidance from career counselors and mentors shaped my career decisions.	400	1.11	0.74	Disagree
6	The labor market demand for specific skills for professions influenced my career choice.	400	1.12	0.90	Disagree
7	The ease of obtaining further education for professional certifications in my field affected my career decision.	400	1.34	0.20	Disagree
8	The working conditions and job security associated with a profession influenced my career choice.	400	1.56	0.40	Disagree
9	Social status and the prestige of a profession played a role in my career selection.	400	1.88	0.60	Disagree
10	The influence of successful role models in my field contributed to my career choice.	400	1.30	0.80	Disagree
Criterion mean score			2.50		

Source: Fieldwork, 2024

The results in Table 3 indicate that none of the factors listed had a significant influence on the career choices and decisions of university graduates in Cross River State, as the mean scores for all items are below the criterion mean score of 2.50, ranging from 1.02 to 1.93. The standard deviation scores, which range from 0.00 to 0.90, suggest a low level of variability in the respondents' perceptions of the factors influencing their career choices. Thus, the findings suggest that university graduates in Cross River State did not consider any of the listed factors as significant influences on their career decisions, with all respondents disagreeing that factors such as job opportunities, parental expectations, financial rewards, personal interests, guidance from career counselors, labor market demand, ease of obtaining further education, working conditions, social status, and influence of role models played a significant role in their career choices. The results indicate a lack of clear influences on the career decisions of university graduates in Cross River State.

Hypothesis

There is no significant relationship between educational background and factors influencing the career choices of university graduates in Cross River State.

Table 3: Chi-Square tests of independence results for relationship between educational background and factors influencing the career choices of university graduates in Cross River State.

Building levels	Educational background	Marital status	Family income location	χ^2	P
High	Arts	Single	Urban	30.723	< .001
Average	Sciences	Married	Rural	26.281	< .001
Low	Social Sciences	Single	Rural	10.660	< .05
High	Engineering	Married	Urban	22.915	< .001
Average	Arts	Single	Rural	19.005	< .05
Low	Education	Married	Urban	25.795	< .001
High	Arts	Single	Rural	15.253	< .05
Average	Agriculture	Married	Rural	4.065	.397
Low	Sciences	Single	Urban	3.841	.428
High	Veterinary	Married	Rural	14.140	< .05

Source: Fieldwork, 2024

Chi-square tests of independence were computed to test the hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between educational background and factors influencing career choices. The results found significant relationships ($p < .05$ or $p < .001$) for all comparisons except average family income and agriculture/married/rural, and low family income and sciences/single/urban. Since the majority of tests showed significant relationships, we reject the null hypothesis. This indicates that there are significant relationships between educational background and the factors of marital status, family income and location for most of the comparisons in the sample. Therefore, the factors do appear to influence career choices differently depending on educational discipline.

Discussion of findings

The first result indicates that the required skills were not adequately gained based on graduates' self-assessment. The university curriculum in Cross River State appears not to have sufficiently equipped graduates with practical business competencies needed for self-employment and effective resource allocation. This finding is in agreement with other studies which revealed that even though universities emphasize soft skills like teamwork, communication and problem-solving (Amago et al., 2020), graduates still lack technical skills for self-employment like accounting, procurement and inventory management (Odia & Odia,

2013). The second result showed that the universities experience did not sufficiently inspire independent business ambitions despite perceptions that certain enablers could aid intentions among graduates. This finding is in consonant with previous research which revealed that intentions do not always translate to action due to challenges in skill acquisition and start-up capital (Francis et al., 2019; Umoh et al., 2014). Also, attitudinal surveys indicate positive perceptions towards independence, but inadequate preparation discourages realization (Owolabi & Dada, 2013). The third finding equally indicated that there is a significant relationship between educational background and factors influencing the career choices of university graduates in Cross River State. This finding is in tandem with that of Lam (2017) who found that educational background can also affect an individual's career aspirations because individuals with higher levels of education may have higher career aspirations and be more likely to pursue leadership roles. Moreover, research by (Komives, 2017) suggests that educational background can also impact an individual's career adaptability.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, there is a need for universities to reform pedagogy to better equip graduates with practical entrepreneurial and business competencies in order to inspire career autonomy through self-employment and effective resource allocation for community development.

Recommendations

The universities should work more closely with industry to integrate practical, skills-based learning into their curricula. Partnering with local businesses and organizations will help make education more applied and ensure graduates gain the competencies needed to thrive in the real world. Also, establishing mentorship schemes, startup challenges and access to capital could help boost intentions by providing more hands-on learning of entrepreneurship as a viable option. With the right preparation and encouragement, graduates' aspirations of independent careers can be better realized.

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