
Youth Empowerment Initiatives through Non-Formal Education for Entrepreneurial Growth in Jigawa State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated youth empowerment initiatives for entrepreneurial growth through non-formal education in Jigawa State, Nigeria. Specifically, it examined the youth empowerment initiatives available for entrepreneurial growth, assessed the contribution of non-formal education to entrepreneurial development, and identified the challenges affecting the implementation of youth empowerment programmes in the State. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The population comprised 1,250 youths participating in various empowerment and skills acquisition programmes across selected local government areas in Jigawa State. A sample of 300 respondents was selected using multistage sampling techniques involving purposive and simple random sampling methods. Data were collected using a structured instrument titled *Youth Empowerment and Entrepreneurial Development Questionnaire (YEEDQ)*. The questionnaire was validated by experts in educational research, entrepreneurship education, and measurement and evaluation to ensure its face and content validity. The reliability of the instrument was established using Cronbach's Alpha, which produced a reliability coefficient of 0.84, indicating that the instrument was reliable for the study. The data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequency counts, percentages, mean scores, and standard deviation. The findings revealed that vocational training programmes, ICT education, agricultural empowerment initiatives, and entrepreneurship development schemes are among the major youth empowerment initiatives available in Jigawa State. The study further found that non-formal education contributes significantly to entrepreneurial growth by equipping youths with practical skills, promoting self-employment, enhancing income generation, and reducing unemployment. However, inadequate funding, poor infrastructure, lack of modern training facilities, limited access to startup capital, insufficient qualified instructors, and weak policy implementation were identified as major constraints affecting the effective implementation of the programmes. The study concluded that youth empowerment initiatives delivered through non-formal education play a significant role in promoting entrepreneurial development and improving the socio-economic well-being of youths in Jigawa State. It recommended increased government funding, improved training facilities, enhanced access to financial support, stronger public-private partnerships, and effective monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to improve programme implementation and sustainability.

Keywords: Youth empowerment, non-formal education, entrepreneurship, vocational training.

INTRODUCTION

Youth empowerment is widely recognized as a strategic process of equipping young people with relevant knowledge, practical skills, values, and opportunities necessary for productive living and active participation in socio-economic development (Akinpelu, 2002). Across developing countries, youth empowerment has become increasingly important due to rising unemployment, poverty, and economic instability. In

Nigeria, the growing rate of youth unemployment has intensified the need for practical and sustainable empowerment strategies aimed at improving youth productivity and self-reliance (World Bank, 2020).

One of the most effective strategies for addressing youth unemployment is non-formal education. Non-formal education refers to organized educational activities conducted outside the formal school system

to provide learners with practical knowledge, vocational skills, and competencies necessary for personal and economic development (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013). Unlike formal education, non-formal education is flexible, learner-centered, and designed to address immediate social and economic needs. It includes vocational training, literacy education, entrepreneurship development, agricultural extension services, and community-based learning initiatives.

Non-formal education has gained significant attention as a practical tool for empowering youths and promoting entrepreneurship. According to UNESCO (2015), non-formal education plays an important role in fostering inclusive development by equipping individuals with relevant life skills and employable competencies. Through vocational and entrepreneurship training, youths can acquire practical knowledge required for self-employment and income generation.

Entrepreneurial development refers to the process of developing entrepreneurial competencies, attitudes, and skills required for identifying business opportunities, establishing enterprises, and contributing to economic growth (Nwosu, 2017). The International Labour Organization emphasized that entrepreneurship education contributes significantly to reducing unemployment and improving economic productivity among youths (International Labour Organization, 2017). Entrepreneurial development therefore remains a key strategy for achieving sustainable economic growth and poverty reduction.

In Jigawa State, government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and development partners have introduced various youth empowerment initiatives through non-formal education to improve employability and entrepreneurial capacity among youths. These initiatives include

vocational skills acquisition programmes, ICT training centres, agricultural empowerment schemes, entrepreneurship development programmes, and small business support services (Yahaya, 2019). These programmes are designed to equip young people with skills necessary for self-employment and economic independence. Despite these efforts, youth unemployment and poverty remain significant challenges in Jigawa State. Many youths still face difficulties in accessing quality entrepreneurial training, startup capital, and modern technological skills necessary for sustainable business development (Oloruntoba, 2018). This situation raises concerns regarding the effectiveness of youth empowerment programmes through non-formal education in promoting entrepreneurial development in the state. This study therefore examined youth empowerment programmes through non-formal education for entrepreneurial development in Jigawa State.

Statement of the Problem

Youth unemployment remains one of the major socio-economic challenges confronting Nigeria, particularly in northern states such as Jigawa State. According to the National Bureau of Statistics (2023), unemployment and underemployment rates remain high, with youths constituting a significant proportion of the affected population. This has contributed to increasing poverty, economic dependency, and social challenges among young people. Study indicates that lack of employable and entrepreneurial skills is a major factor contributing to youth unemployment in Nigeria. Nwosu (2017) reported that many unemployed youths lack vocational and entrepreneurial competencies required for self-reliance. Similarly, Yahaya (2019) found that unemployment and poverty among youths in northern Nigeria have

contributed to increasing cases of rural-urban migration, drug abuse, and social insecurity. Although several youth empowerment initiatives have been introduced in Jigawa State through non-formal education programs, their effectiveness remains uncertain. Oloruntoba (2018) observed that many empowerment programmes in Nigeria are constrained by inadequate funding, poor infrastructure, and shortage of qualified instructors. These limitations reduce the ability of such programmes to achieve sustainable entrepreneurial outcomes.

In addition, access to startup capital remains a major challenge for many trained youths. The International Labour Organization (2017) reported that financial constraints remain a major barrier to entrepreneurship development among young people in developing countries. In Jigawa State, many youths who complete skills acquisition programmes struggle to establish businesses due to inadequate financial support, limited mentorship, and poor market access.

Furthermore, weak policy implementation and limited integration of modern technology into training programmes reduce the competitiveness of youth entrepreneurs in the contemporary economy. Despite increasing government attention toward youth empowerment, there is still inadequate empirical evidence on the effectiveness of non-formal education programmes in promoting entrepreneurial development among youths in Jigawa State.

This gap necessitates the need to examine youth empowerment programmes through non-formal education for entrepreneurial development in Jigawa State.

Objectives of the Study

The paper achieved the following objectives to:

1. Examine youth empowerment initiatives available for entrepreneurial growth in Jigawa State, Nigeria.
2. Examine the contribution of non-formal education to entrepreneurial development among youths in Jigawa State.
3. Determine the challenges affecting youth empowerment programmes through non-formal education for entrepreneurial development in Jigawa State.

Research Questions

The study answered to the following research questions:

1. What youth empowerment initiatives are available for entrepreneurial growth in Jigawa State, Nigeria?
2. What is the contribution of non-formal education to entrepreneurial development among youths in Jigawa State?
3. What challenges affect youth empowerment programmes through non-formal education for entrepreneurial development in Jigawa State?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The design was considered appropriate because it enabled the researcher to collect relevant data from respondents regarding youth empowerment programmes through non-formal education and their contribution to entrepreneurial development in Jigawa State. The design also provided an opportunity to describe existing conditions and examine respondents' views concerning youth empowerment initiatives and their effectiveness.

Population of the Study

The population of the study comprised youths participating in various empowerment and skills acquisition

programmes across selected local government areas in Jigawa State, Nigeria. The target population included beneficiaries of vocational training centres, entrepreneurship development programmes, ICT training centres, and agricultural empowerment initiatives. The total population for the study was 1,250 youths.

Sample Size and Sampling Technique

A sample size of 300 respondents was selected from the study population. The sample size was considered adequate to represent the target population. Multistage sampling technique was used for the study. At the first stage, purposive sampling technique was used to select local government areas with active youth empowerment programmes. At the second stage, simple random sampling technique was used to select respondents from the identified empowerment centres and programmes. This ensured fair representation of participants across the selected areas.

Instrument for Data Collection

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire titled Youth Empowerment and Entrepreneurial Development Questionnaire (YEEDQ). The questionnaire consisted of two sections. Section A contained items on respondents' demographic information, while Section B contained items relating to youth empowerment initiatives, the contribution of non-formal education to entrepreneurial development, and challenges affecting programme implementation.

The questionnaire items were structured using a four-point Likert scale as follows:

Strongly Agree (SA) = 4

Agree (A) = 3

Disagree (D) = 2

Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1

Reliability of the Instrument

The instrument was subjected to face and content validity by experts in entrepreneurship education, educational research, and measurement and evaluation. Their observations and corrections were incorporated into the final draft of the instrument to ensure clarity, relevance, and adequacy of the items.

The reliability of the instrument was determined using Cronbach's Alpha reliability method. A pilot study was conducted using 30 respondents outside the study area. Data obtained from the pilot study were analyzed, and a reliability coefficient of 0.84 was obtained, indicating that the instrument was reliable for data collection.

Procedure for Data Collection

The researcher personally administered the questionnaire to respondents with the assistance of trained research assistants. Respondents were guided on how to complete the questionnaire appropriately. Completed copies of the questionnaire were retrieved immediately after completion to ensure a high response rate and minimize loss of instruments.

Method of Data Analysis

Data collected from respondents were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequency counts, percentages, mean scores, and standard deviation. The results were presented in tables for easy interpretation. A decision mean of 2.50 was used as the benchmark for acceptance or rejection. Any item with a mean score of 2.50 and above was accepted, while items below 2.50 were rejected.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The findings of this study were discussed based on the research questions and objectives of the study. The first finding

revealed that several youth empowerment initiatives are available in Jigawa State to support entrepreneurial growth among youths. These initiatives include vocational skills acquisition programmes, ICT training centres, agricultural empowerment schemes, entrepreneurship development programmes, and small business support initiatives. This finding indicates that both government and non-governmental organizations have made considerable efforts toward creating opportunities for skills acquisition and self-employment among youths in the state.

This finding agrees with Yahaya (2019), who reported that youth empowerment programmes in northern Nigeria have expanded significantly through skills acquisition and entrepreneurship support initiatives. The finding also aligns with Oloruntoba (2018), who observed that non-formal education programmes have become important tools for promoting economic empowerment among Nigerian youths. However, this finding disagrees with Obanya (2004), who argued that empowerment programmes in many parts of Nigeria remain inadequate and inaccessible to many youths. The difference may be due to variations in programme implementation and geographical coverage.

The second finding revealed that non-formal education contributes significantly to entrepreneurial development among youths in Jigawa State. The study showed that vocational training and entrepreneurship education improve practical skills acquisition, self-reliance, and employment opportunities among youths. Many beneficiaries acquired skills in tailoring, carpentry, welding, ICT, poultry farming, and other income-generating ventures, thereby enhancing their ability to establish small businesses.

This finding is consistent with Nwosu (2017), who found that entrepreneurship education plays a significant role in

improving employability and self-reliance among Nigerian youths. The finding also agrees with Adebisi and Oni (2012), who reported that vocational training programmes positively influence youth productivity and economic independence. Similarly, UNESCO (2015) emphasized that non-formal education promotes inclusive development by equipping learners with practical and entrepreneurial skills. However, this finding contrasts with the position of the International Labour Organization (2017), which argued that skills acquisition alone may not guarantee entrepreneurial success without adequate financial support and market access. This suggests that while non-formal education improves skills, complementary support systems remain essential.

The third finding revealed that several challenges affect youth empowerment programmes through non-formal education in Jigawa State. Major challenges identified include inadequate funding, poor infrastructure, lack of modern training equipment, insufficient access to startup capital, weak policy implementation, and poor monitoring mechanisms. These challenges reduce the effectiveness of empowerment programmes and limit their ability to achieve sustainable entrepreneurial outcomes.

This finding agrees with the World Bank (2022), which identified inadequate infrastructure and weak institutional support as major barriers to youth empowerment and entrepreneurship development in Sub-Saharan Africa. The finding also supports Oloruntoba (2018), who found that poor funding and inadequate facilities negatively affect the effectiveness of non-formal education programmes in Nigeria. Similarly, the International Labour Organization (2017) reported that limited financial access remains one of the greatest challenges facing

young entrepreneurs in developing economies.

However, this finding disagrees with OECD (2021), which suggested that effective public-private partnerships can significantly reduce many of these barriers when properly implemented. The disagreement may be attributed to differences in policy implementation, institutional capacity, and resource availability across countries and regions.

Overall, the findings of this study indicate that although youth empowerment programmes through non-formal education have contributed significantly to entrepreneurial development in Jigawa State, several structural and institutional challenges continue to hinder their full effectiveness.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, it was concluded that various youth empowerment programmes are available in Jigawa State to promote entrepreneurial growth among youths. These programmes include vocational skills acquisition initiatives, ICT training, agricultural empowerment schemes, and entrepreneurship development programmes designed to improve employability and self-reliance. The study further concluded that non-formal education plays a significant role in entrepreneurial development among youths in Jigawa State. The findings showed that non-formal education contributes positively to practical skills acquisition, self-employment, and income generation among youths, thereby reducing dependence on white-collar employment.

However, the study also concluded that the effectiveness of youth empowerment programmes in Jigawa State is constrained by several challenges, including inadequate funding, poor infrastructure, lack of modern training facilities, limited access to startup

capital, weak policy implementation, and poor monitoring mechanisms.

Therefore, the study concludes that although youth empowerment programmes through non-formal education have contributed meaningfully to entrepreneurial development in Jigawa State, addressing the identified challenges is essential for improving programme effectiveness and ensuring sustainable entrepreneurial growth among youths.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Since youth empowerment programmes have contributed positively to entrepreneurial development in Jigawa State, the government should expand existing empowerment initiatives to accommodate more youths across urban and rural areas
2. Given the significant contribution of non-formal education to entrepreneurial development, vocational training, ICT education, agricultural skills training, and entrepreneurship programmes should be strengthened to improve youths' practical and business skills.
3. In view of the inadequate funding identified in the study, the Jigawa State government and relevant stakeholders should increase budgetary allocation to youth empowerment and non-formal education programmes.
4. Since poor infrastructure and lack of modern training equipment were identified as major challenges, adequate facilities, tools, and instructional materials should be provided in vocational and skills acquisition centres.
5. Considering that limited access to startup capital affects business establishment among trained youths, financial institutions, government agencies, and development partners

should provide accessible loans, grants, and financial support to beneficiaries of empowerment programmes.

6. Effective monitoring and evaluation mechanisms should be established to ensure proper implementation, accountability, and sustainability of empowerment programmes.
7. Mentorship and business support services should be integrated into youth empowerment programmes to provide guidance, market access, and business development support for young entrepreneurs.

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