



Strategy for improving university funding and sustainable development in south-east Nigeria: The entrepreneurial practice option

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Abstract

This study focused on entrepreneurial practice as a strategy for improving university funding and sustainable development in South-Eastern Nigeria. The study adopted the descriptive research design. A sample of 300 federal and state university administrators was drawn using the stratified random sampling technique. An instrument named University Entrepreneurial Practice Questionnaire (UEPQ) was used for the study. The instrument was validated by test experts in the Faculty of Education, University of Port Harcourt. The reliability of the instrument was determined using test re-test method. The reliability coefficient of correlation obtained was 0.78. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions while t-test was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 alpha level of significance. The results of the study show that South-Eastern universities engage in entrepreneurial practices such as printing and publishing, bottling companies, micro-finance banks. The universities engage in modern packaging as well as wider advertisement as strategies to facilitate entrepreneurial practice. Furthermore, it was revealed that entrepreneurial practice contributes to funding universities; lastly, fund misappropriation, insecurity, lack of collaboration with resource persons are obstacles facing entrepreneurial practice in Nigerian universities. It was however recommended among other things that universities should identify the entrepreneurial practices thriving in South-Eastern universities and adopt same; Government should support universities entrepreneurial ventures since it reduces financial burden on the government.

Keywords: University funding, Sustainable development, Entrepreneurial practice

Introduction

There has been public outcry by many concerned about the funding of education especially the university level in Nigeria. In other words, universities in Nigeria are not adequately funded. It is factual that the government has adopted measures to improve universities funding but it is rather unfortunate that none of them has drastically addressed the problem of inadequate funding. Universities are citadels of knowledge. Whereas knowledge is power, the power of knowledge permeates every human endeavour. The point being explicated here is that the fact that the problem of inadequate funding is yet to be tackled drastically by the government stresses the need for universities to adopt strategies for generating additional funds. It is crystal clear that for success to be achieved, change in the traditional ways of doing things is necessary. Innovative approaches to solving societal problems without overdependence in a particular system are the contemporary practices the world over. In order to key into this global practice, the Federal Government of Nigeria directed through the National Universities Commission, (NUC) that all federal universities should generate ten percent of their yearly funds internally through various revenue diversification means (Odebisi and Olabisi, 1999) [6].

The directive above could be referred to as a paradigm shift in university funding. Hitherto, it has been the responsibility of the government to fund universities but that is one of the characteristics of a traditional university. No wonder Gibb, Haskins, and Robertson (2009) described a traditional university as a system that was at one time centrally or total regionally public funded.

Universities as tertiary institutions have broad goals to achieve. According to the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2014: 39-40), the goal of tertiary education shall be to:

- a. Contribute to national development through high level manpower training;
- b. Provide accessible and affordable quality learning opportunities in formal and informal education in response to the needs and interests of all Nigerians;
- c. Provide high quality career counselling and lifelong learning programmes that prepare students with the knowledge and skills for self-reliance and the world of work;
- d. Reduce skill shortages through the production of skilled manpower relevant to the needs of the labour market;
- e. Promote and encourage scholarship, entrepreneurship and community service;
- f. Forge and cement national unity; and
- g. Promote national and international understanding and interaction.

The above outlined goals of tertiary education cannot be achieved without adequate fund. Since achieving the goals of tertiary education is capital intensive, it becomes glaring that the traditional university where only the government provide fund for its operations is failure bound. The assertion emanates from the fact that government alone cannot adequately provide funds for a modern university. Meanwhile, the government, universities and non-governmental organizations have made efforts to raise other sources of revenue generations to augment the federal government allocation. These sources or channels of income

generation available for universities need to be expanded as universities' demands and challenges increase. The only solution to the issue of inadequate fund is diversification of revenue generation. Education in the 21st century is no longer a privilege but a right to every citizen of this country. Consequently, it has been noted that for more than three decades now the number of universities has increased, likewise the number of students enrolment into higher institutions across the nation on yearly basis. This requires adequate fund to cater for them (Orji and Mackae, 2013) [7].

The situation where the universities are handicapped due to inadequate funding will ultimately affect the production of adequate manpower needed for growth and sustainable development. It is on this basis that universities are called to strategize for alternative funding especially by looking into the entrepreneurial practice. According to School of General Studies, University of Port Harcourt (2011: 6) entrepreneurship is "the process of creating something different with value by devoting the necessary time and effort assuming the accompanying financial, psychic, and social risks, and receiving the resulting rewards of monetary and personal satisfaction". In line with the above definition, the university as an organization need to make innovations in the entrepreneurial practice to make economic gain. Entrepreneurship education ought to be expanded in such a way that it would become a significant source of revenue for the universities. If this is done, the universities would be able to provide for itself some of the facilities and staff requirements necessary for the sustenance of the universities. It is known that the absence of certain infrastructure and poor condition of service have led to protests by students as well as industrial actions by the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), Senior Staff Association of Nigerian Universities (SSANU), and the Non-Academic Staff Union of Universities (NASU). Each of the strikes have negative impact on the university. The thrust of this paper is to explore the entrepreneurial practice among Nigerian universities as a strategy for alternative source of fund which would engender sustainable development.

Statement of the problem

It has been well observed in the past two decades now in this country that there have been incessant strikes among tertiary institutions in Nigeria. Some of the strikes lasted from six months to one year hence one can imagine its resultant effects on the teeming students across the nation and the society at large. The realities of the nation's economy at present show that universities and other sectors in Nigeria are not adequately funded. More so, the annual federal allocations to the universities in Nigeria are not adequate considering the challenges facing university education in the 21st century. The inability of the government to fund universities adequately or fulfil their agreement with NUC for these years now could be attributed to a lot of factors like: The higher rate of corruption in the country, misappropriation of public funds by the authorities or simply bad government.

As a result of the foregoing, the business of providing qualitative university education for the Nigerian child becomes practically impossible. Also, provision of infrastructure, equipment,

Resources and personnel is now in jeopardy. These frequent strikes and several threats to embark on strikes or warning strike by ASUU have caused an unusual delay in academic programme of students. Also, it has led to disagreement, crises, social unrest and poor productivity in achieving university global standards and in building the needed manpower development that will tackle societal problems ravaging our nation. As a result of this, a lot of measures have been taken by the government, such as encouraging universities to embark on internally generated revenue. It is in the light of posing solutions to this menace that the study investigates the entrepreneurial practice as a strategy of improving university funding so that the idea of depending solely on the government fund will be discouraged and lasting harmony will return in our universities for a sustainable development.

Aim and objectives of the study

The aim of this study is to investigate entrepreneurial practice as a strategy for improving university funding and sustainable development in South-East, Nigeria. Specifically, the objectives of the study are:

1. To identify the entrepreneurial practices that are carried out in universities in South-Eastern Nigeria.
2. To examine the strategies adopted by the universities in South-Eastern Nigeria to facilitate entrepreneurial practices.
3. To identify the extent to which entrepreneurial practices contribute to the funding of universities in South-Eastern Nigeria.
4. To reveal the major obstacles facing the entrepreneurial practice among universities in South-Eastern Nigeria

Research Questions

The following questions guided the study

1. What are the entrepreneurial practices that are carried out in universities in South-Eastern Nigeria?
2. What are the strategies adopted by the universities in South-Eastern Nigeria to facilitate entrepreneurial practices?
3. How does entrepreneurial practice contribute to the funding of universities in South-Eastern Nigeria?
4. What are the major obstacles facing entrepreneurial practice among universities in South-Eastern Nigeria?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses guided the study

1. There is no significant difference between the mean scores of state and federal universities administrators on the types of entrepreneurial practices carried out in universities in South-Eastern Nigeria.
2. There is no significant difference between the mean scores of federal and state universities administrators on the strategies adopted by the universities in South-Eastern Nigeria to facilitate entrepreneurial practices
3. There is no significant difference between the mean rating of federal and state universities administrators on the contributions of entrepreneurial practices in funding of universities in South-Eastern Nigeria
4. There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of federal and state universities administrators on the obstacles facing entrepreneurial practice among universities in South-Eastern Nigeria.

Research Methodology

The descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. The design is proper or considered appropriate because the study investigates and describes what the contemporary situation is without manipulation. This is in line with Nwankwo (2011) [5] who posited that descriptive survey describes certain attributes to features of the sample as they are and as required by the study at the particular time without manipulating any independent variables of the study. The population of the study consist of 800 university administrators in ten public universities in the South-East Geo-political zone of Nigeria which included University of Nigeria Nsukka (UNN), Michael Okpara University of Agriculture Umudike (MOUAU), Imo State University Owerri (IMSU), Abia state University (ABSU), Enugu State University of Science and Technology (ESUT), Chukwemeka Odemegwu Ojukwu University (COOU), Federal University, Ndifu-Anike (FUNA), Nnamdi Azikiwe University (NAU), and Ebonyi State University (EBSU). The University administrators include the Vice Chancellors, Deputy Vice Chancellors (Administration and Academics),

Registrars, Bursars, Librarians, Deans of Faculty, Heads of Department, Directors of Institutes and Centres etc. The sample size is 300 universities administrators which represent 40% of the entire population. Stratified random sampling technique was adopted as well as simple random sampling technique. The instrument was a structured questionnaire designed by the researchers. It was a 20 item instrument designed in a four point Likert scale response of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). The instrument had two sections. Section 'A' was for the respondents' bio-data while Section 'B' elicited information on the research questions. The instrument was directly administered by the researchers and also retrieved. The data collected were analysed using mean and standard deviation for the research questions while T-test statistical tool was used to test the hypotheses.

Results

Research Question One: What are the entrepreneurial practices that are carried out in universities in South-Eastern Nigeria?

Table 1: Mean score and standard deviation analysis of responses on the entrepreneurial practices carried out in South-Eastern universities

S/N	Item	SA	A	D	SD	\bar{X}	S.D	Criterion X	Remark
1	Production companies	122	98	48	32	3.03	1.11		Agreed
2	Micro finance banks	104	89	52	55	2.80	1.12		Agreed
3	Transport companies	16	31	188	65	1.99	1.03	2.5	Disagree
4	Printing and publishing companies	138	88	40	34	3.10	0.91		Agree
5	Bottling companies	116	124	22	38	3.06	0.32		Agree
	Cluster mean					2.80			

Table 1 above shows that all the items except transport companies are the entrepreneurial practices carried out in

South-Eastern universities. This is further exemplified by cluster mean of 2.80 which is above the criterion mean.

Table 2: Shows t-test analysis of mean difference between federal and state administrators on the entrepreneurial practice in south-Eastern Universities

Administrators	N	X	S.D	Df	t-Cal	t-Crit	Result
State	141	11.21	2.99				Insignificant
				298	1.770	1.960	
Federal	159	11.83	3.09				(Accept Ho)

From the analysis in Table 2 mean and standard deviation for state and federal administrators were 11.21; 2.99 and 11.83; 3.09 respectively. At degree of freedom of 298, the t-table (critical) value is 1.960 and the t-calculated is 1.770. Since the t-table is greater than the t-calculated, the null hypothesis is therefore accepted. By implication, the result shows that there is no significant difference between the

mean scores of states and federal universities administrators on the types of entrepreneurial practices carried out in universities in South-Eastern Nigeria.

Research Question Two: What are the strategies adopted by universities in South-Eastern Nigeria to facilitate entrepreneurial practice?

Table 3: Mean score and Standard Deviation analysis of responses on the strategies adopted by South-Eastern universities in facilitating entrepreneurial practice

S/N	Item	SA	A	D	SD	X	S.D	Criterion X	Remark
1	Network strategy	52	39	121	88	2.18	1.10		Disagree
2	Modern packaging strategy	89	120	61	30	2.89	1.32		Agreed
3	Establishing of more firms	52	62	93	93	2.24	0.94	2.5	Disagree
4	Wider advertisement strategy	82	131	64	23	2.91	0.90		Agree
5	Diversified funding base	94	120	51	35	2.91	1.21		Agree
	Cluster mean					2.63			

Table 3 above shows that items 1 and 3 which is network strategy and establishing of more firms are not strategies adopted to facilitate entrepreneurial practice in South-

Eastern universities. Apart from those two items, the rest are strategies used. The cluster mean of 2.63 authenticates the position or assertion.

Table 4: shows t-test analysis of mean difference between federal and state administrators on the strategies adopted to enhance entrepreneurial practice in South-Eastern universities

Administrators	N	X	S.D	df	t-Cal	t-Crit	Result
State	141	11.32	2.99				Insignificant
				298	1.162	1.960	
Federal	159	11.71	2.69				(Accept Ho)

Table 4 shows mean and standard deviation of 11.32; 2.99 and 11.71; 2.69 for state and federal administrators respectively. At degree of freedom of 298, the t-calculated value is 1.162 and the t-critical is 1.960. Since the t-calculated is less than the t-critical, we accept the null hypothesis. This means that there is no significant relationship between the mean scores of federal and state

universities administrators on the strategies adopted by universities to facilitate entrepreneurial practices in South-Eastern Nigeria

Research Question Three: To what extent does entrepreneurial practice contribute to the funding of universities in South-Eastern Nigeria?

Table 5: Mean score and standard deviation analysis of responses on the ways entrepreneurial practices contribute to funding of universities

S/N	Item	SA	A	D	SD	X	S.D	Criterion X	Remark
1	Provide funds for payment of staff salaries	82	108	61	49	2.74	1.11		Agreed
2	Generate income for procurement of learning facilities	67	81	99	53	2.54	0.21	2.5	Agreed
3	Provide funds for development of physical infrastructure	111	83	43	63	2.80	0.94	2.5	Agreed
4	Generate income for staff development	108	89	64	39	2.88	0.97		Agree
5	Provide for management of students welfare	64	91	80	65	2.51	1.04		Agree
	Cluster mean					2.69			

From Table 5 above, each of the five items had mean score above the criterion mean. Moreover, the cluster mean is

2.69 which implies that entrepreneurial practices contribute to funding of universities in South-Eastern Nigeria.

Table 6: shows t-test analysis of the mean rating between federal and state administrators in entrepreneurial contributions in funding of universities in South-Eastern Nigeria

Administrators	N	X	S.D	df	t-Cal	t-Crit	Result
State	141	11.43	2.78				Insignificant
				298	2.169	1.960	
Federal	159	12.25	3.64				(Reject Ho)

From Table 6 above, mean and standard deviation for both state and federal administrators were 11.43; 2.78 and 12.25; 3.64 respectively. At degree of freedom of 298, the t-calculated is 2.169 and the t-critical value is 1.960. Since the t-calculated value is greater than the t-critical value at degree of freedom of 298, the null hypothesis is rejected meaning that there is actually a significant difference

between the mean score of state and federal universities administrators on the contributions of entrepreneurial practice in funding universities in South-Eastern Nigeria.

Research Question Four: What are the major obstacles facing entrepreneurial practice among universities in South-Eastern Nigeria.

Table 7: Mean score and standard deviation analysis of responses on the major obstacles facing entrepreneurial practice among universities in South-Eastern Nigeria

S/N	Item	SA	A	D	SD	X	S.D	Criterion X	Remark
1	Lack of collaboration with resource person	87	114	65	34	2.88	1.01		Agree
2	Misappropriation of funds	122	78	41	59	2.87	1.13	2.5	Agreed
3	Lack of qualified manpower	62	43	96	99	2.23	0.94		Disagree
4	Insecurity	71	88	93	48	2.60	1.21		Agree
5	Poor maintenance culture	109	82	64	45	2.85	0.96		Agree
	Cluster mean					2.69			

Table 7 above shows that apart from item 3 which is lack of manpower, the rest are major obstacles facing

entrepreneurial practice among universities in Nigeria. Besides, the cluster mean of 2.69 supports the assertion.

Table 8: shows t-test analysis of mean rating difference between the opinion of state and federal administrators on obstacles to entrepreneurial development

Administrators	N	X	S.D	df	t-Cal	t-Crit	Result
State	141	11.11	2.90				Insignificant
				298	2.27	1.960	
Federal	159	12.03	3.90				(Reject Ho)

From the analysis in Table 8, mean and standard deviation for the state and federal administrators were 11.11, 2.90, 12.03 and 3.90 respectively. The t-calculated value was 2.27 while the t-table value is 1.960 and degree of freedom is 298. Since the t-calculated is greater than the t-critical at 298 degree of freedom, the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternate accepted meaning that there is actually a significant difference between the mean rating of federal and state universities administrators on the obstacle facing entrepreneurial practice among universities in South-Eastern Nigeria.

Discussion of Findings

The study revealed that South-Eastern universities go into production, bottling, printing and publishing press as well as micro-financing. This means that most federal and state universities are into production of one thing or the other. For instance, the Micheal Okpara University of Agriculture Umudike is into production of farming outputs like oil, etc. This may be due to the availability of some factors of production like land, labour, capital and the required human resources. Also, South-Eastern universities go into printing and micro-financing. This is true because most universities have their own microfinance banks that run separately from the university. They also go into bottling like the production of pure water, bottle water, palm oil, vegetable oil etc. All these are most of the practices going on in South-Eastern universities. On the contrary, going into transportation is a rare entrepreneurial practice in the universities. This may either be handled by private individuals, who may register under the universities to run campus shuttle. Furthermore, it is found that there is no significant difference in the ratings of the entrepreneurial practices going on in these universities between the federal and state administrators. These findings mean that both the federal and state administrators have same view or observations on the entrepreneurial practices going on in the universities. Although the federal administrators' perception through their mean rating was higher, this was not significant enough to cause a difference. The findings here especially the insignificant difference in rating is little bit surprising. On the contrary, these findings may be accepted as it would be attributed to the level of non-availability of fund generally. It could as well be explained on the basis of the recession that has engulfed the nation which may make it impossible for some universities especially the federal universities to provide opportunities for entrepreneurial development more than state schools. The findings of the study are also not very surprising due to negligence of the federal universities by the government which makes it possible for it to record a significant difference in its entrepreneurial practice. The present study is in total conformity with what was presented by Shina (2012) ^[10] who reported that there was limitation to the source of funding provided by the government to the federal controlled universities.

The study also revealed that some strategies adopted by South-Eastern universities to facilitate entrepreneurial practice include modern packaging strategy, wider advertisement as well as diversification of the fund base. This means that universities in the South-Eastern part of Nigeria do interact with individuals and groups, creating alliances, developing shared ventures, entering into licencing agreements, sub-contracting etc. It also means that

universities in the South-East do create accord between two or more companies to share plans, innovations and technologies. Furthermore, the findings highlight that South-Eastern universities go into wider advertorials like print, radio, television and online broadcast as a means of promoting and facilitating entrepreneurial practice. Furthermore, the findings means that as part of enhancing entrepreneurial practice, universities in the South-East do expand their business to other sector. The findings also show no significant difference in the mean rating of state and federal administrators in various strategies adopted by South-Eastern universities in facilitating entrepreneurial practice. This result means that both the federal and state administrators see no other ways of facilitating entrepreneurial practice other than the ones listed. It also means that both categories of administrators share similar views or have similar observation towards improving entrepreneurial practice. The findings here is not surprising because whether federal or state universities, the strategies for improving it entrepreneurial practice remain the same. The finding here is also in line with that reported earlier by Kutzhanova, Lyons and Lichtenstein (2009) ^[4] who noted that ways of entrepreneurial development include technical skills, as well as those which comprises self-awareness which in the present study is explained by wider advertisement options.

Furthermore, the study revealed that entrepreneurial practice has contributed in funding universities by providing money used for payment of staff salaries, generating income for procurement of learning facilities, providing funds for development of physical infrastructure, generating income for staff development as well as providing income for management of students' welfare. Amidst all these revelations, one may be surprised by these findings because a careful consideration of the sufferings of the lecturers, the unavailability of learning facilities, poor students' welfare as showcased by poor hostel accommodations and learning environments, degrading infrastructure, poor staff development plans etc. it is quite astonishing to know through the findings that entrepreneurial development has contributed in these capacities. Arguably, it could also be that the findings are true but that such contributions are insignificant compared to the needs of the staff and students of the South-Eastern universities. These findings as well may be so because the administrators who to some extent are comfortable may be bias ignoring the true suffering of the ordinary lecturers. It could as well mean that even when monies generated from entrepreneurial practice are used for these purposes, such utilizations are not sufficient compared to the realities faced by both students and lecturers as seen today in the educational sector. The findings here have affirmed that which was still reported earlier by Kutzhanova *et al.* (2009) ^[4] who noted that entrepreneurial practice have helped in creating economic opportunities especially in institutions of learning. The findings are also supported by Sani (2015) ^[8] as he opined effort should be made public to improve revenue generation by making use of effective resources like entrepreneurial skills.

Lastly the study revealed that the major challenges facing entrepreneurial development in South-Eastern universities include misappropriation of funds, insecurity as well as poor maintenance culture. This result means that entrepreneurial practice would have developed more if not for individuals mismanaging and misappropriating funds. Burglary is also

responsible for the underdevelopment of entrepreneurial practice. The inability of people to maintain few existing ones is also identified as a major challenge that entrepreneurial practice is facing. The findings also reveal that there is a significant difference in the mean rating of state and federal administrators on these challenges to entrepreneurial development. This means that what the federal administrators may see as an obstacle may not actually be so as perceived by the state administrators. Alternatively, what constitute a challenge for state administrators may not also be a challenge to the federal ones. This means that federal administrators see more challenges faced by the school entrepreneurs than those in the state level. It also means that federal administrators are far better in identifying these challenges more than the state administrators. The findings here are not also very surprising because it is known that some of the challenges faced by the state schools are quite different from that faced by federal schools. Basically, such issue is funding which most state tertiary institutions are deeply involved. The present findings are in line with Ekundayo and Ajayi (2009)^[1] who noted that the problems faced by Universities today include financial crisis, poor infrastructure, brain-drain, as well as the erosion of university autonomy.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, it is recommended that

1. State and federal universities should identify the best entrepreneurial practice that are thriving in the South-Eastern universities and adopt such in the process of implementing entrepreneurial practice.
2. Some entrepreneurial ventures being practiced in these universities like transportation which may not be yielding significant fruits should be scrapped.
3. University authorities should adopt the best strategies that are already in existence in the promotion of entrepreneurial practice in Nigeria.
4. State and the federal universities should liaise on the possible strategies that work best and form a sort of partnership in order to help each other in achieving greater heights in entrepreneurial practice.
5. Universities should identify those entrepreneurial practices that have helped in its funding and improve on such in order to achieve greater success.
6. The government should support these entrepreneurial practices in universities as it could reduce the burden of funding on their part.
7. All challenges faced by these universities in the process of carrying out entrepreneurial practice should be trashed by setting up a monitoring/supervisory unit, setting up adequate security as well as re-educating the staff on good maintenance culture

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