

Entrepreneurship Skills Development, Government Support and Growth of SMEs in Nigeria.

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Abstract: *SMEs growth enhances economic growth and development of nations. SMEs growth can be achieved via the skills of the entrepreneurs and government institutional support. Thus, the objective of this study is to investigate entrepreneurship skills development, government support and growth of SMEs in Nigeria. This study employed primary data and 150 structured questionnaires were randomly administered to the 500 entrepreneurs of SMEs registered with the Lagos Chapter of Nigerian Association of Small and Medium-size Enterprises (NASME) as the population of the study and 133 questionnaires were retrieved. Correlation and hierarchical regression analyses were employed as methods of data analysis. And the findings showed that formal and government support for entrepreneurship has a significant relationship with growth of SMEs in Nigeria but informal education has a neutral relationship with the growth of SMEs. There is moderating effect of government support and entrepreneurship skill development on the growth of SMEs (P -value < 0.05). The low positive relationship seems unusual and one may feel that may be because the study was conducted when the country was undergoing economic recession. Thus, this study recommended that practical teaching should be included in the tertiary education entrepreneurship syllabus, the period of informal entrepreneurship education should be longer and the government should continue to give SMEs support in terms of policies formation and execution.*

Key words: *Entrepreneurship Education, Government Support, SMEs Growth*

JEL Classification: *M13*

I. Introduction

Small and Medium-size Enterprises (SMEs) are immense determinants to achieving economic growth, especially in the third world countries. SMEs generate profits and provide return on investment to the entrepreneurs or owners which contribute to per capita income and standard of living of the people (Bosire & Nzaramb, 2013). Most businesses in Nigeria are SMEs and thus more than 60% of the workforce in Nigeria is employed by SMEs (Adegbuyi, Fadeyi, Kehinde, & Adegbuyi, 2016; Afolabi, 2015; Eniola & Entebang, 2015). SMEs have boosted domestic production in Nigeria. Hence, the growth of SMEs is a crucial factor for the government of developing countries to pay utmost attention to as it is an important subset of entrepreneurship.

Entrepreneurship has been a subject of discussions among scholars, academicians, researchers, professionals and

practitioners all over the world including Nigeria. Entrepreneurship is now a mandatory course that is being taught in Nigerian tertiary institutions so as to equip the students with the necessary skills to become entrepreneurs. Odia and Odia (2013) emphasized the importance of developing entrepreneurship skills, as well as the important need for general business skills, administrative skills, sales and marketing skills, self-motivation skills, time management skills, financial know-how skills, technical and human relationship skills which are essential for successful entrepreneurial activities. Entrepreneurship skill can be acquired via formal education and informal education. Formal education and informal education create circumstances in which a person can acquire and develop the skill that will help him/her achieve the objectives of the business (Bosiren & Zaramba, 2013; Erasmus, 2005). The difference between formal education

and informal education is that education prepares the individual for life while training prepares him or her to perform specific tasks (Bosiren & Zaramba, 2013).

Over the years, the government of Nigeria, like many other countries of the world, has realized the importance of the development of SMEs for the economic development of the country and has put in place many policies, strategies and institutions to enhance the development of entrepreneurial skills of Nigeria citizens (Adegbuyi et al., 2016); Eniola & Entebang, 2015; Afolabi, 2015). Small and Medium-size Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN), Industrial Training Institute (ITI), and other policy institutions were put in place (Adegbuyi et al., 2016; Eniola & Entebang, 2015; Afolabi, 2015; Osemeke, 2012). There was the directorate of employment and skill acquisition centers all over the six geo-political zones of the country; yet, the expected entrepreneurial skills have not been properly acquired and this was reflected in the way and manner in which SMEs fail in Nigerian economy.

The review of past studies showed that entrepreneurship skills development and government support have been examined differently. Ladzani and Van Vurren (2015) examined entrepreneurial training for emerging SMEs in South Africa; Adeoye, (2015) investigated entrepreneurship and economic growth and development in Nigeria; Eniola and Entebang (2015) examined government policy and performance of SMEs in Nigeria; Tambwe (2015) studied the impact of entrepreneurial training on micro, small and medium-size performance in Tanzania. Osemeke's (2012) study was on entrepreneurial development and interventionist agencies in Nigeria. All these past studies among others have not considered how entrepreneurial skills development has been fostered by government policies and programmes towards the growth of SMEs operators in Nigeria. Thus, a gap has been identified. It is based on the fact that the study wants to examine entrepreneurship skills development, government support and growth of SMEs in Nigeria.

1. Objectives of the Study

The broad objective of this study is to examine the extent to which government entrepreneurship skills development programmes have enhanced the growth of SMEs in Nigeria. Specifically, this study has the following objectives:

- To assess the relationship between entrepreneurship informal education and the growth of SMEs in Nigeria
- To determine the relationship between entrepreneurship formal education and the growth of SMEs in Nigeria
- To investigate the relationship between government support policies and SMEs growth in Nigeria
- To determine if there is a moderating effect of the government support and entrepreneurship skill development on SMEs growth

II. Literature Review

1. Conceptual Clarifications

Entrepreneurship can be described as the process of producing something new with value by creating enough time, effort with social risk and resulting in reward and monetary and personal satisfaction (Daluba & Odiba, 2013). Aina and Salako (2008) viewed entrepreneurship as the willingness and ability of an individual to seek out investment opportunities and take advantage of the scarce resources to exploit the opportunities for profitably. Thus, entrepreneurship skills development is the process of acquiring and upgrading general know-how of engaging in entrepreneurial activities to achieve stated goals. The skills needed to initiate new ideas with value, to take risk and to seek out investment opportunities are referred to as entrepreneurship skills.

1.1. Entrepreneurship Formal Education and Growth of SMEs

Entrepreneurship formal education is referred to as the acquisition of entrepreneurial knowledge, skills, values and qualities within the four walls of academic institution in tertiary institutions. Entrepreneurial education is focused on developing youths with passion and multiple

skills (Izedonmi & Okafor 2010). Entrepreneurship formal education is considered to converse and instill intentions, competencies, skills and values needed to recognize entrepreneurial opportunities and start a new business venture (Tijani, 2017). Entrepreneurial education (EE) involves developing behaviours, skills, and attributes applied individually and/or collectively to help individuals and businesses to create, cope with, and enjoy change and innovation (Seikkula-Leino, 2008 cited in Amadi-Echendu, Phillips, Chodokufa, & Visser, 2016); Izedonmi and Okafor 2010). Akhuemonkhan, Raimi & Sofoluwe, (2013) opined that poor curriculum implementation in Nigerian educational institutions and inadequate funding are part of the challenges of entrepreneurship education in Nigeria. Amadi-Echendu et al. (2016) recommended that universities should incorporate entrepreneurial education in all their qualifications, expose students to on-the-job training, assist with the incubation of business ideas that students have, and provide a platform for cross-pollination of knowledge between industry, academia, and government. **It is therefore hypothesized in this study that Entrepreneurship formal education does not have positive relationship on growth of SMEs in Nigeria.**

1.2. Entrepreneurship Informal Education and Growth of SMEs

Entrepreneurship informal education is referred to as the process of acquisition of entrepreneurial skills, knowledge, attitudes, values and qualities in non-academic institutions. This can be in the form of training or apprenticeship. Entrepreneurship informal education is important for both employed and unemployed labour force in any economy, especially in developing economies, where there is a high rate of poverty and unemployment. Professionals like doctors, pharmacists, and others, who start their own practices (business) with knowledge of their fields, but possess limited knowledge of how to run a business, need entrepreneurship training (Adegbuyi et al., 2016). Tambwe (2015) was of the opinion that entrepreneurship informal education (training) irrespective

of where it is offered, will assist the behavior of an entrepreneur in terms of taking calculated risk, need for achievement, networking, growth seeking, etc. Bechard and Toulouse (1998); Ladzani and Van Vuuren (2002) noted that lack of training (informal education) is the main reason for SMEs failure in South Africa. They further stressed the importance of entrepreneurship informal education (training) to entrepreneurs in achieving business objectives. In the same vein, a study in India by Gupta (1989) revealed that 80 percent trained entrepreneurs in SMEs made more profits. **Thus, this study hypothesized that Entrepreneurship informal education does not have positive relationship on growth SMEs in Nigeria.**

1.3. Government Support, Entrepreneurship Skill Development and Growth of SMES

The Nigerian Federal Government has established several agencies and institutions to develop entrepreneurship skills and to aid SME activities towards achieving economic growth. After the civil war in Nigeria between 1967 and 1970, the Nigerian government has been demonstrating commitment towards the support of SMEs and entrepreneurship as a whole in order to bridge the gap in skills development in the industrial sector (Adeoye, 2015). The Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) in 1986 gave birth to the National Directorate of Employment (NDE), the National Open Apprenticeship Scheme (NOAS) and, the Small and Medium-size Enterprise Development Association of Nigeria (SMEDAN) (Adegbuyi et'al, 2016; Adeoye, 2015; Thaddeus, 2012). Other institutions and agencies established by the government since the end of civil war to date include the National Directorate of Employment (NDE), the Industrial Development Coordinating Centre (IDDC), the Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP), the State Ministry of Industry, etc. Recently, during Jonathan's administration, the Youth Enterprise with Innovation in Nigeria (YouWIN), the Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme (SURE-P), the Train-to-Work Partnership Programme and Young Entrepreneur Scheme (YES)

have been implemented. All these measures of government support on SMEs and entrepreneurship have played different roles such as technical support, financial support, etc.. Two issues are of focus here- the effect of government support on the growth of SMEs and the development of entrepreneurial skills. Hence, this study hypothesized that Government support policies and programmes do not have significant relationship with SMEs growth in Nigeria. And there is no moderating effect of government support and entrepreneurship skill on growth of SMEs in Nigeria

III. Research Methodology

A survey research design was employed. The study was conducted in Lagos state, Nigeria. Lagos state has the highest number of SMEs operating in the country (Uchegbulam, Akinyele & Ayodotun 2015; Dauda, Akingbade & Akinlabi, 2010; Lawal, 2002) and the state is the economic hub of Nigeria. The population of this study is the total number of SMEs operating in Lagos State Nigerian Association of Small and Medium-size Enterprises (NASME). The total number is 500 (NASME, 2017). Simple random sampling technique and primary method of data collection were adopted through questionnaire as the research instrument. Lagos State Chapter

was contacted to assist the researchers to contact their registered members in filling in the questionnaire. A total of 150 well-structured questionnaires were randomly administered to SMEs entrepreneurs registered under aegis of NASME, Lagos State Chapter. The structured questionnaire has two parts. Part 1 entails the bio-data of the respondents and part 2 entails the questions on each variable employed to achieve the study objectives. And the questionnaires were ranked by 5 Likert scale options from strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree and strongly disagree which made the questionnaire closed-ended. This study adopted entrepreneurship formal education and entrepreneurship informal education questions from the study of Ogundele, Akingbade & Akinlabi (2012) and Ooi, Selvarajah, & Meyer (2011) while questions on government support and growth of SMEs were self-developed making the total questions to be 26. The reliability test and validity test were run on the data collected from the entrepreneurs in order to know how reliable and valid their responses would be. And the hypotheses formulated were tested through regression and correlation analysis.

IV. Data Analyses and Interpretations

Table 1: Demographic Details of the Respondents

	Responses	Frequency	Percent(%)
Gender	Male	88	66.2
	Female	46	33.8
	Total	133	100
Age	21-30 years	16	12.0
	31-40 years	54	40.6
	41-50 years	36	27.1
	51-60 years	18	13.5
	61-70 years	9	13.5
	Total	133	100
Marital Status	Single	33	24.8
	Married	100	75.2
	Total	133	100
Qualifications	SSCE	12	9.0
	DIP/OND/NCE	9	6.8
	HND/B.Sc	72	54.1
	M.Sc/M.Ed/MBA	40	30.1
	Total	133	100

Years of Experience	Below 5 years	40	30.1
	5-9 years	33	24.8
	10-14 years	24	18.0
	15-19 years	3	2.3
	20 years and above	33	24.8
	Total	133	100

Source: Researchers' Field Study

Table 1 displayed the demographic details of the respondents for this study. It was shown that 88 (66.2%) of the respondents were male and 46 (33.8%) were female. The age of the respondents in the table revealed that 16 (12%) of the respondents were of 21-30 years of age, 54 (40.6%) were 31-40 years of age, 36 (27.1%) were 41-50 years of age, 18 (13.5%) were 51-60 years of age and 61-70 years of age of the respondents were 9 (13.5%). The marital status of the respondents in the table showed that 33 (24.8%) were single and 100 (75.2%) were married. Equally, the table further revealed that 12 (9.0%) of the respondents had SSCE, 9 (6.8%) had Diploma/ Ordinary National Diploma or National College of Education, 72

(54.1%) of the respondents had Higher National Diploma or Bachelor of Science certificates and 40 (30.1%) had Masters qualifications. The years of experience of the respondents in the table showed that 40 (30.1%) had been in business for a period below 5 years, 33 (24.8%) had been in business between 5-9 years, 24 (18%) had been in business for a period of 10-14 years, just 3 (2.3%) had been in the business for 15-19 years and 33 (24.8%) of the respondents had been in the business for a period of 20 years and above. These data imply that the respondents of this study were educated and have been in the small and medium-size enterprises for a reasonable number of years.

Table 2: Reliability and Validity Test of the Data

Variables	Reliability Test	Validity Test	Items
Entrepreneurship Formal Education	.833	.774	6
Entrepreneurship Informal Education	.875	.779	6
Government Support	.756	.741	7
Growth of SMEs	.842	.707	7

Source: Researchers' Computation

Table 2 shows the reliability and validity of the data obtained from the respondents. The reliability test was done using Cronbach Alpha to ascertain the internal consistency of the responses and KMO test was used for the validity to ascertain if the instruments measure what was meant to be measured. According to Nunnally (1978), a reliability test that is above .70

is acceptable and reliable. And in the view of Comrey (1973), a validity test that is above .60 is considered to be valid. The results of the reliability and validity tests of the employed variables in this study were above .70 and .60 respectively. Thus, the data for this study is reliable and valid.

1. Hypotheses Testing

Table 3: Correlation Result of the Hypotheses 1, 2 and 3

	r ²	P-Value
Entrepreneurship Formal Education	.018	.124
Entrepreneurship Informal Education	.000	.812
Government Support	.409	.000

Dependent variable: Growth of SMEs
Source: Researchers' Computation

Table 4: Model Summary of Moderating Effect

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Std Error	Sig Value
1	.100 ^a	.010	.002	.90851.010	.254
2	.668 ^b	.446	.438	.68195.436	.000

^a Predictors: (Constant), Entrepreneurship Skill Development

^b Predictors: (Constant), Moderator

^c Dependent Variable: GSMEs

Source: Researchers' Computation

2. Interpretation

Table 3 showed the results of the hypotheses for this study. The r^2 depicted that 0.018 (1.8%) of the variations in the growth of SMEs was attributed to entrepreneurship formal education. This is indeed a positive but weak relationship. Thus, entrepreneurship formal education has a weak positive relationship with the growth of SMEs in Nigeria. Based on this, the null hypothesis is rejected. In the same vein, the findings in Table 3 indicated that entrepreneurship informal education has neutral relationship with the growth of SMEs in Nigeria. The r^2 of 0.000 means entrepreneurship informal education cause no variation in the growth of SMEs in the country. Yet, there was no negative and positive relationship. In addition, the results in the above table showed that there is a significant and positive relationship between government support and growth of SMEs. The P- value .000 is less than the

significant level 0.05% for this study. And the R^2 value of .409 showed that 40.9% of the changes in the growth of SMEs was explained by the government support. Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected.

The result of the moderating effect of this study is shown in Table 4. The result showed that 10% ($r^2 = .100$) of the variations in the growth of SMEs is explained by entrepreneurship skills development. Equally, the table revealed that 44.6% of the variations in the growth of SMEs is attributed to the combination of entrepreneurship skills development and government support. Thus, this implied that government support moderated the effect of entrepreneurship skills development on the growth of SMEs as the $R^2 = .446$ of the moderator in the result is greater than the $R^2 = .100$ of entrepreneurship skill development. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Table 5: Summary of the Findings

S/N	Hypotheses	Decision
1	Entrepreneurship formal education does not have positive relationship with the growth of SMEs in Nigeria	Rejected
2	Entrepreneurship informal educations does not have positive relationship with growth SMEs in Nigeria	Neutral
3	Government support policies and programmes do not have significant relationship with SMEs growth in Nigeria	Rejected (P-value < 0.05)
4	There is no moderating effect of government support and entrepreneurship skills on the growth of SMEs in Nigeria	Rejected (P-Value < 0.05)

Source: Researcher's Computation, 2017

3. Discussion of Findings

Entrepreneurship is important for the development of economy. The findings of this study have shown that acquiring both entrepreneurship formal and informal education by entrepreneurs does have an impact on the growth of SMEs in Nigeria. The results indicated that entrepreneur-

ship education acquired in the tertiary institutions in Nigeria does determine the growth and success of small and medium-size enterprises. In the same vein, the entrepreneurship informal education acquired through apprenticeship, training, seminars, etc. has a neutral relationship with the growth of small and medium scale in Nigeria.

These findings have revealed that there is a lot of work that needs to be done on both formal and informal entrepreneurship education in Nigeria despite the fact that there is no negative relationship.

The weak positive relationship of entrepreneurship education and the growth of SMEs could be traced to inadequate funding of tertiary institution by the government to support entrepreneurship formal education and faulty entrepreneurship curriculum in Nigerian tertiary institutions. And also, it could be that entrepreneurship programmes, seminars, training, etc. are not organised or anchored by the expertise in SMEs operations. The informal education may not be comprehensive enough to accommodate vital aspects of entrepreneurship such as financial management skills, forecasting skills, etc. The reasons for the low relationship of the findings with previous finding could be caused by environmental factors which are beyond the control and manipulation of SMEs operators in Lagos. These environmental factors include economic recession, erratic power supply, hyper-inflation, high prices of raw materials, etc. These environmental factors were immense in Nigerian business environment at the time of conducting the study. The most critical of the environmental factors is the economic recession. The recession was a turbulent situation for Nigerian entrepreneurs in small and medium scale business. There was low customer patronage because of the exorbitant prices of goods and service which hindered business growth in Nigeria. Therefore, this finding is consistent with the findings of previous study such as Tambwe (2015), Odia & Odia (2013), Bosire & Nzaramba (2013), Akinruwa, Awolusi & Ibojo (2013) and Ladzani & Van Vuuren (2002) on entrepreneurship formal education and government support.

But the findings showed that government support has a significant relationship and effect on the growth of SMEs in Nigeria, which is in line with past studies. This implies that the government have been giving attention and support to the needs of SME entrepreneurs for their business to grow and expand. The policies of the Nigerian

government especially on macroeconomic variables have contributed immensely to the SMEs activities which have resulted in their growth. In other words, it could be said that government agencies that are charged with the responsibilities of overseeing the SMEs have been efficient in their functions because government support moderates the relationship and effect of entrepreneurship skills development on growth of SMEs in Nigeria. This finding is supported by Eniola and Entebang (2015), Tende (2014), Akinruwa et al.(2013), and Osemeke (2012).

V. Conclusion and Recommendations

It has been established that entrepreneurship formal education and government support have positive relationship with the growth of SMEs in Nigeria while entrepreneurship informal education was neutral in impacting the growth of SMEs. Thus, it is evidenced in this study that the formal education acquired by SMEs entrepreneurs or operators aids in making their businesses grow, as well as the manner in which the government supports them. The neutrality of entrepreneurship informal education in this study could be attributed to short periods of acquiring or mastering the required practical knowledge to enhance business growth. It was further revealed that role of government in supporting the influence of entrepreneurship skills development on SMEs growth is fundamental.

Based on these findings, this study recommended that entrepreneurship education in Nigerian tertiary institutions should be reviewed in a way that practical teaching would be included. Duration of entrepreneurial apprenticeship, training, seminars for SMEs operators or students' needs to be longer. Most seminars, training and apprenticeship organised for the SMEs in Nigeria are just for short period of time and most of them are theoretically based. Organisers of any form of informal entrepreneurship education need to make the period of learning longer so as to enable the participants to acquire the necessary knowledge that they will employed in their businesses to achieve business growth. Finally, the government must continue

to show support for the success of SMEs entrepreneurs in Nigeria. Sound policies on SMEs and their effective executions are vital and will lead to rapid economic growth.

VI. Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, the following conclusions have been drawn:

The study has revealed significant positive correlations between working capital components with firm's performance in Nigeria. It has been revealed that most of SBEs working capital which is crucial to the survival of their business is unnecessarily tied up thus reducing liquidity capacity of their business.

The investments made are not always reviewed after a certain period of time. This

means that if the investment goes bad on the way there is no way to know how to bring it back on track and thus the initial investment is lost.

Though some of the SBEs may have cash for investment, the majority of them invest without evaluating the investments. This puts the initial amount invested at stake as some of the businesses may not be viable.

The findings reveal that few of the SBEs in Nigeria were fully utilizing accounting information systems and that contributed to their failure. However, some other studies conducted in developed nations disagreed with the findings showing that most of the SBEs were mostly utilizing accounting information systems.

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