

## **Entrepreneurial Education and Graduate Employability in Nigeria: Students' Perception of Unilorin's Graduate Self-Employment (GSE 301) Programme.**

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### **Abstract**

*Entrepreneurship education in Nigeria higher institutions was designed to give graduates the platform for self-reliance and employment after graduating from school. However, since the commencement of the Graduate Self Employment (GSE 301) programme in the University of Ilorin, it seems as if the students for whom the program was designed are less enthusiastic and optimistic about its potentials to guarantee self employment. This study therefore took a closer look at how students perceived the benefits of GSE 301 programme. The study population consisted of all 300 level students of the University of Ilorin (estimated at 12,000) during the 2021/2022 academic session. The study target population was all 300level students of the Faculty of Education, University of Ilorin (estimated at 1,850) during the 2021/2022 academic session. A researcher designed questionnaire titled "Graduate Self Employment and Employability Questionnaire" was used to collect all data for the study. The instrument was subjected to both face and content validity by expert in the Faculty of Education, University of Ilorin. A pilot study of the instrument was done at Kwara State University, Molet. The exercise was subjected to Cronbach Alpha test and it yielded a .075 coefficient of reliability. The study found out that students faced several challenges in the course of the programme. It was also found that GSE 301 has a significant potential in guaranteeing self employment after graduation. The study therefore recommended that the Technical and Enterprise Center (TEC) that anchor GSE 301 should minimize the challenges faced by students and ensure they are exposed to more recent equipment and facilities. Finally, all their facilitators should be given training on how to effectively deliver instruction to students in conditions similar to the lecture room rather in what used to be Trainer-apprentice system.*

**Keywords:** GSE 301, Facilitators, Enterprise, Entrepreneurship Education

### **Introduction**

The issue of joblessness among graduates has taken a new global dimension; the number of youths from various institutions who are looking for employment opportunity is increasing day by day in Nigeria. A major defect in the Nigerian educational system especially the universities is the theoretical inclination. It has been observed that, most Nigerian universities produce graduates who are best suited only for white collar jobs with little or no basic skills of any vocational relevance. It is natural in such a situation that unemployment rate among graduates will be very high (Ejere & Tenda, 2012). The type of education being offered in most of our tertiary institutions

produce graduates that are grossly unfit to meet the demand of the present world of work. The time lag between graduation and employment dates continue to lengthen causing frustration and anxiety for the concerned graduates.

In order to produce graduates that match the economic challenges posed by unemployment, universities have to introduce technical and vocational education courses so as to arm their students with entrepreneurial skills that will enhance self-employment. Entrepreneurship and skills training incorporates the total learning experience offered in our educational institutions to impact knowledge, ideas and abilities to make informed judgment and be in a position to create goods and services. Entrepreneurship is becoming a focal point for the various economies of the world as a result of its potency to greatly influence economic growth and development through entrepreneurial drive.

Entrepreneurship is not a new concept in African traditional learning and training system. The educational system in practice in the pre-colonial era incorporated entrepreneurship that promotes innovative learning and self-reliance. It was variously referred to as functional education. In recognition of the importance of entrepreneurship, the National Universities Commission(NUC,2004) initiated series of actions at addressing graduates' unemployment in Nigeria. The Entrepreneurship Education Programme(EEP) was introduced into the Nigerian university curriculum. The primary aim was to enhance the production of nationally-relevant, globally-competitive and self-relevant graduates.

In response to this, the University of Ilorin in 2008/2009 academic year started the Technical and Entrepreneurship Centre(TEC) as a Directorate in the university with a tripartite mandate of Entrepreneurship development and training, Community Based Development Experience and Service(COBES) and Work-study. The TEC designed a 2 credit compulsory course for students to horn their entrepreneurial skills. The course with over eighty (80) different skills is titled Graduate Self Employment (GSE 301) and was introduced in 2017/2018 academic session.

### **Literature Review**

Employability refers to a new graduate possessing a set of skills or competencies that enable him to compete and secure employment whether in formal employment or self-employment. Yorke and Knight (2016) sees employability as a set of achievement that make individuals more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupation.

However, Pool and Sewell (2007) described employability as having a set of skills, knowledge, understanding and personal attributes that make a person more likely to choose, secure and retain occupations in which they can be satisfied and successful. Employability skills therefore consist of knowledge, attributes and attitudes that will enable students to get and maintain jobs in which they can be fulfilled.

In Nigeria of today, graduates who enter the job market face a number of challenges like decrease in employment opportunities, fast changing technology and an increasing personal responsibility for continual up-skilling and lifelong learning. Babatunde and Durowaiye (2014) argues that employability refers to an individual's perception of his/her possibilities of getting new or better employment while Moreland(2006) defines employability as a set of skills, knowledge and personal attributes that makes an individual more likely to secure a job. Solomon (2007) describes employability as skills required not only to gain employment, but also to progress within an enterprise so as to achieve one's potentials.

Entrepreneurship education is therefore a programme associated with the inculcation of entrepreneurial skills and qualities in the learners. Ooi, Selvarajah and Meyer(2011) described it as the scope of lecturers, curricular and programme developers attempt to provide students with the necessary entrepreneurial competences, knowledge and skills geared towards the pursuit of a career in entrepreneurship. Akanbi (2013) defined entrepreneurship as the willingness and ability of an individual to seek for investment opportunities to establish and to run an enterprise successfully. Entrepreneurship education implies all forms of knowledge delivery that seeks to empower the individual to create real wealth in the economic sector, thereby advancing the cause of development of the nation as a whole. The goal of entrepreneurship education is to empower graduates irrespective of their areas of specialization (Bassey & Archibong, 2005), to help graduates acquire increased understanding of entrepreneurship and equip them with entrepreneurial approach to the world of work (Oguntimehin & Olaniran, 2017). The European Union (2002) observed that the objectives of entrepreneurship education are to raise students' awareness of self-employment as a career option, promoting development of personal qualities that are relevant to entrepreneurship, such as creativity, risk taking and responsibility and providing the technical and business skills that are needed in order to start a new venture.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The entrepreneurial curriculum designed by the NUC for universities was to ensure self-reliance and employability of students after graduating. Many universities in Nigeria did not start the entrepreneurship programme early enough while some did. The take off was not very smooth as it was bedeviled with a lot of problems that ranged from inability to get training equipment and instructors for the various skills, building space suitable for entrepreneurial training, as well as no too practical curriculum for the few skills incorporated into the programme. In University of Ilorin, the GSE programme was introduced in 2017/2018 academic session. As the Faculty of Education representative on the board of the TEC that anchored the GSE 301, I noticed lack of enthusiasm among the students such that, many did not register for the course at the beginning of the session citing ignorance of the course status, those that registered did not take skills acquisition class attendance seriously. Many do not even know why the course was introduced and made compulsory. Many claimed the course was forced on them to fulfill graduation requirements (Gabadeen & Raimi, 2012). Previous works on the subject by Ifedili and Ofoegbu (2011) found that most students are disinterested in skill acquisition course because of the absence of standard learning materials on entrepreneurship education and as such most do not see it as medium through which self-employment can be obtained. Many students complained on the conduct of the instructors, such that they are insinuating their trainers themselves lack the skills they are to impart and some complained that, skills were actually not being taught only attendance were taken. In view of these observed challenges, the researcher was out to sample GSE 301 students experience and their perceptions on the potentials of the programme as a means to creating graduate self employment.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The main objective of the study is to assess the perception of students on the employability potentials of Unilorin Graduate Self Employment (GSE 301) programme. Other specific objectives are to;

1. Identify the entrepreneurship skills in GSE 301 that students enrolled for
2. Find out how students perceived potentials of GSE 301 skills acquisition programme to be self employed
3. Identify problems and challenges faced by students during the teaching of GSE 301
4. Harvest suggestions from students on how these challenges can be resolved

### **Research Questions**

The researcher raised the following questions to help have an insight into the minds of students that participated in the skill acquisition programme

1. What are the most common skill components of GSE 301 that students registered for?
2. What are the potentials of skills in GSE 301 to guarantee self employment?
3. What are the challenges faced by student in the course of learning the skills in GSE 301?
4. What are the suggested solutions by students to these challenges?

### **Research Hypothesis**

H<sub>0</sub>: Graduate Self Employment (GSE301) Programme has no significant employability potentials for students after graduation

### **Scope of the Study**

The study is basically a perception study, because it sought the opinion of students that have undergone training in the GSE 301 programme. The study is limited to University of Ilorin Technical and Enterprises Centre's GSE 301 programme. The study population comprised of the present 300 level students of the university that offered the course in the last academic session 2021/2022. The target population are 300 level students of the Faculty of Education in 2021/2022 academic year. The study used a researcher designed questionnaire to have all information about the skill enrolled for and challenges encountered during the programme. The information gathered was processed with descriptive and inferential statistics. The study however, did not involve the management of the TEC and skill instructors since the researcher is interested in how students perceived the programme.

### **Methodology**

The study adopted a descriptive design so that the researcher will be able to describe respondents' experiences during the time they offered the course and to effectively explain why they took some actions during the course work. The study population consisted of all 300 level student of the University of Ilorin during the 2021/2021 academic session. The study target population 2,127 students in the Faculty of Education during the 2021/2022 academic session. The study adopted convenience sampling method to select at 10 %(200) of the target population. The researcher collected the needed information with a questionnaire titled "Employability Potentials of GSE 301 Questionnaire" It was self designed. The instrument contained three sections (A, B, and C). Section A contain information on students demographic data while section B contain information on

students choice of GSE skills, the operation of the programme in terms of instructor availability, competence and utilization of materials/equipment relevant to the skills being learned. Section C harvest opinion of students on the challenges they faced and their experience during the course of the programme. It also contained students suggested solutions to the challenges as well as their overall rating of the programme to prepare them for self- reliance.

The instrument was subjected to both face and content validity by the researcher's colleagues. It was latter subjected to reliability test during a pilot study of the instrument in Kwara State University, Molete. The data collected was analyzed using Cronbach Alpha at 0.05 level of significance which yielded .75 coefficient of reliability. To answer the research questions and the hypothesis, descriptive statistic was used for the questions while inferential statistics of Pearson product moment statistics was used to test the hypothesis.

### Result Presentation

**Research Question 1:** What are the most common skill components of GSE 301 that students registered for?

**Table 1: Common Enterprises skill registered for by students**

S/N	ITEM	NUMBER	%
1.	Building Construction	10	5
2.	Creative Arts	12	6
3.	Soap Making	30	15
4.	Body Cream Making	28	14
5.	Interior Decoration	32	16
6.	Networking	15	7.5
7.	Waste Management	4	2
8.	Video coverage	26	13
9.	Food Processing	14	7
10.	Photography	15	7.5
11.	Dry cleaning	14	7
	Total	200	100

Table 1 shows the most common skills students offered out of 81 different skills in GSE 301. It shows that interior decoration, soapmaking , video coverage and body cream making are the most offered skills among the students.

**Research Question 2:** What are the potentials of skills in GSE 301 to guarantee self employment? To answer the question, the benchmark for mean rating is 2.5 which indicate high potentials while mean below 2.5 indicate very low potentials.

**Table 2: Potentials of entrepreneurship education to guarantee self employment**

S/N	Item	SA	A	SD	D	Mean
1.	GSE skill has a strong potential for creating employment after graduation	135	34	17	14	3.45
2.	Raised Students awareness towards Entrepreneurship	120	25	26	29	3.18

Table 2 shows that student perceived skills acquired in GSE 301 has very high potentials to guarantee self employment after leaving school. With a Mean of 3.45, it shows that the potentials are very high.

**Research Question 3:** What are the challenges faced by student in the course of learning the skills in GSE 301?

**Table 3; Challenges faced by students in the teaching and learning of GSE 301**

S/N	Item	Number	%
1.	Location of skill centers are wildly scattered	125	62.5
2.	Most skill centers lack the right equipment to teach	168	84.0
3.	Very many of the facilitators are not competent enough	175	87.5
4.	Timing of skill classes often clash with regular course works	130	65.0
5.	Program cost is high and mostly unaffordable	157	78.5
6.	Sometimes, classes are shifted due to poor preparation	180	90.0

Table 3 shows the challenges faced by students during the skill acquisition classes. It shows the depth of problems encountered by students as many of the student experienced serious challenges during the programme. The one problem that is of concern here is poor preparation as many as 90 % of respondents says classes do not normally hold as scheduled.

**Research Question 4:** What are the suggested solutions by students to these challenges?

**Table 4: Suggested solutions by students to the challenges of teaching and learning GSE 301**

S/N	Item	Number
1.	Skill centers should locate close to students regular lecture theatres	100
2.	Modern equipment should be procured for teaching the skills	178
3.	Facilitators competency should be ascertained before being assigned	147
4.	Programme should be scheduled properly to avoid clashing with regular classes	164
5.	Program cost should be subsidized by the University authority	172

### Hypothesis Testing

Ho : Graduate Self Employment (GSE301) Programme has no significant employability potentials for students after graduation

**Table 5: Relationship between GSE 301 and self-employment potentials**

Variables	N	Mean	SD	Df	Calc r- value	Critical r-value	Decision
GSE,301	200	16.540	1.58	198	0.644*	0.116	Rejected
Self-employment	200	13.850	1.767				

The result in table 5 revealed that Graduate Self Employment (GSE301) Programme has no significant employability potentials for students after graduation. Hence the stated null hypothesis is retained.

### Discussion of Findings

The findings of the study revealed the different skills components of GSE 301 offered by students during the 2021/2022 academic session. Out of the 81 skills available at TEC during the academic session, 11 were the commonly offered by the students in the study group. Out of these

numbers, Interior decoration was the most offered (16%) followed by Soap making (15%), Video coverage (13%) while Networking and Photography had 15 students offering them (7.5%) respectively. Waste management was the least offered 4 students out of the 200 respondents. The choice of these skills probably is a reflection of students minds on skills that can give them job and self reliance (Falobi,2018) at least in the interim till they may be able to secure jobs related to their course of study in the university.

The respondents' opinion about the potentials of the GSE 301 to guarantee self employment was equally very high with a mean of 3.45 while the potentials of it to raise student awareness towards entrepreneurship was also very high with a mean of 3.18. The challenges facing students during the GSE 301 were many, ranging from the nature of location of some of the skill centers which make it difficult for students to select some of their best preferred skills to poor preparation for the programme by the facilitators. Some of the facilitators' instruction hours are often shifted with little or no prior notice and their commencement dates are usually at the discretion of the facilitators. One other major challenge is the level of competence of the facilitators. Some of the practical lab/workshop oriented skills were not usually selected by students because some of the facilitators do not possess enough skill to deliver instruction in a way students can easily understand and master. Very many of them especially those from outside the university still behave like Master/Apprentice relation. This dearth of qualified and competent lecturers and instructors was acknowledged by Agbolanghor (2016), Atakpa (2016) said that entrepreneurship education is not properly taught in our universities while Amadi and Ochie (2023) concluded in their study that, deficiencies in instructors and facilitators, unavailability of qualified entrepreneurship educators, poor state of infrastructural facilities are some of the challenges facing entrepreneurship teaching in Nigerian Universities

The hypothesis revealed that GSE 301 possess a significant potential to create self employment for students after graduation. This implies that if the programme is well handled and delivered student has a believe that it can give them the opportunity to self employ instead of looking for the job that are not always available. This finding corroborates the findings of Awoyinka (2019) who found out that high effects of Technical and Vocational Educational experience of graduates in Kwara State and self employment. It was also in line with the findings of Mojinyinola (2019) which found a significant influence of entrepreneurial education on graduate employability in Akinyele Local Government Area of Oyo state.

## **Conclusion**

The study revealed the perception of students on the GSE 301 programme of the University of Ilorin TEC. The study found out that a very small fraction of the skills available in the programme were offered by the respondents. Also several challenges and problems confronted the students in the course of learning many of the skills. However, it can be concluded that the students had a very high perception of the potentials of GSE 301 to guarantee self employment after graduation.

## **Recommendations**

From the findings of the study, the following were recommended;

1. The Technical and Enterprise Center(TEC) should make efforts to put most of the skill in workshops located within the TEC' premises. It will ensure effective control and quality assurance.
2. Modern equipment and skill instructional teaching aids should be installed in the “demonstration factories” so that skills impacted on student will still remain relevant and practicable after graduation
3. There should be training for some of their facilitators especially those coming outside the university on how to effectively teach and deliver skills to students.
4. The TEC should effectively coordinate the programme in such a way that clashes with students' cores courses can be minimized. The TEC could liaise with the university authority to set a particular day and time on the university time table for the 300 level students that are offering the course just as Sports and related activities were given special hours on Wednesdays by the university authority.
5. Finally, the University may consider subsidy for students that are offering those courses that require more personal expenditures. It is not out of place if TETFUND could be involved in fund running cost of some of the skills in addition to their provision of physical facilities for skills acquisition.

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