

The Role of Entrepreneurship in Rural Development in Cross River State, Nigeria

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Abstract: - This paper examined the role played by entrepreneurship in rural development in Cross River State, Nigeria. The paper was anchored on the Keynesian Classical Theory. Survey research design was employed for the study. The study employed cluster and simple random sampling technique. Primary data were gathered using a self-administered 4-point Likert Scale questionnaire ranging from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree. The data collected were analyzed descriptively using mean rating. The study found that entrepreneurship plays a critical role in rural economic development such as improvement in the standard of living, creation of employment opportunities, alleviation of poverty, utilization of local resources and reduction of rural-urban migration. The major recommendation was that rural entrepreneurship be encouraged and promoted through the provision of incentives to rural entrepreneurs in the form of tax relief and concession for at least 10 years to encourage them to plough back earnings for scaling and expansion. It also recommended that the government pay attention to infrastructure development and maintenance in rural areas as it goes a long way to encourage trade and business transaction within rural communities, improve the socio-economic wellbeing of rural dwellers and serve as stimuli in boosting the rural economy.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship; Rural Development; Standard of Living, Employment Creation, Poverty Alleviation, Resource Utilization; Rural-Urban Migration.

I. INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurship is the ability to create or build something valuable by mobilizing resources to meet a market need or exploit an opportunity (Ihejiamaizu, 2018). According to Duru (2011), early scholars describe entrepreneurship from the perspective of functions of an entrepreneur, which include as an inventor, imitator, innovator, or more appropriately as a calculated risk taker. Cantillon (1932) was the first to recognize the crucial role of the entrepreneur in economic development, which was founded on individual property right. He said that the essence of the function of the entrepreneur is to bear risk (uncertainty). Kirzner (1997) saw an entrepreneur as someone who is alert to profitable opportunities for exchange – operating on opportunities that arise out of new technology.

In recent times, the growing consciousness of entrepreneurship as an instrument for development has become an interesting issue in Nigeria. The focus of the literature on entrepreneurship has changed from the study of an individual entrepreneur to research on the contributions of

entrepreneurship to development. According to Fredrick and Long (1989), the early definition of the entrepreneur as the agent of change or the person who employed factors of production and profited as a result has been lost. The term “entrepreneur” is now used to refer to a person who starts or operates a new small business. The definition of entrepreneurship has changed from a process of innovation to the founding of a new business. Kuratka and Richard (1997) define entrepreneurship as the dynamic process of creating incremental wealth, created by individuals who take the major risks in terms of equity, time and career commitment of providing value to some products or services. Drucker (1985) describes entrepreneurship as the ability and willingness of an individual to seek out a business opportunity, establish an enterprise around this and run it successfully either for profitmaking or social benefit. Similarly, Osemeke (2012) describes entrepreneurship as the process of creating value by pulling together a unique package of resources to exploit an opportunity.

These definitions point to the fact that entrepreneurship goes beyond simply starting a business. It is a process by which an individual identifies unmet needs and pursues opportunities to create value, without being limited by the resources at hand. In this process, the entrepreneur bears the necessary risks to fulfill those needs through creativity and innovation. An entrepreneur, therefore, is someone who sees opportunities where others see problems, then takes action to identify the solutions to those problems and the customers who will pay to have those problems solved. In line with this thought, several authors such as Petrin (1994) posit that entrepreneurship, as a dynamic force for growth, employment creation, and life quality improvement, has been considered a key element in rural development and sustainable economic development.

II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Large-scale enterprises in the urban centers alone are insufficient to foster economic growth in any nation that is substantially rural, like Nigeria. The population of Nigeria is predominantly rural with more than 50% of people living in the rural areas. Rural industries also play an important role in the national economy, particularly in rural development. Traditionally, rural areas were a field for primary production. They were known as the food basket of the nation as they supplied industrial areas with food and raw materials. They also used to be the main source of resource accumulation,

which provided the basis for the social and economic growth of the center. But these rural areas are faced with many challenges that have limited them from realizing these. Many rural villages are entrenched in poverty so much that the people are an embodiment of it. The rural sector, which harbors a major percentage of the country's population is lacking in development resources.

Several studies have established that rural development has the potential to transform the socio-economic wellbeing of people in the rural areas. As a result, efforts have been put in place to encourage entrepreneurship in rural areas. Most of the studies on entrepreneurship and rural development are foreign-based with a proliferation of these studies in India (Agbenyegah, 2013; Delalić & Oručić, 2014; Paul & Sharm, 2013; Nagler & Naud'e, 2014; Gowrishankar, Raja & Prasad, 2014; Nandanwar & College, 2011; Kushalakshi & Raghurama, 2014; Kader, Mohamad & Ibrahim, 2009; Ansari, Mirdamadi, Zand & Arfaee, 2013) and only a few in Nigeria (Adebayo, Awodun & Ajonbadi, 2016; Amamieyenimighan, 2009, Nwachukwu, & Ezech, 2007; Afolabi, 2015). Even so, none of these researches was carried out in any community in Cross River State. This makes it necessary to investigate the role played by entrepreneurship in rural areas in Cross River State.

III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

This section reviews theory, concepts and empirical works relevant to this study.

3.1 *Theoretical framework: Classical Theory (Keynes, 1936)*

The proponent of this model, John Maynard Keynes (1936), argued that the growth of an economy, whether rural or non-rural, is a function of capitalist investment and employment of labour. According to Essang (1975) cited in Ihejiamaizu (2002), capital tends to flow into sectors characterized by high rates of return and high marginal productivity of capital while labour similarly moves into a sector characterized by high wage rates, and because of this, the theory stipulates that the promotion of economic development in the rural areas should involve measures which will raise the rate of return to capital and the earnings of labour.

This model has some relevance for rural entrepreneurship especially in a developing nation like Nigeria. It links rural economic development with capital investments and labour production, which is the outcome of entrepreneurship. In this study, entrepreneurship is seen as an important strategy for rural development that can transform the economic state of rural areas. When entrepreneurship development measures are put in place, the activities in both farm and non-farm sectors can raise the rate of return to capital investment and the earnings of labour.

3.2 *Role of Entrepreneurship in Rural Development*

More than ever before, rural development is connected with entrepreneurship. Petrin (1994) affirms that institutions and individuals promoting rural development now see entrepreneurship as a strategic development intervention that could accelerate the rural development process. According to Gómez-Araujo (2012), Bryden and Hart (2005) opine that "entrepreneurial activity in rural areas help to diversify the economic network and thus avoid dependence on mono-production". The authors believe that it is able to offer a greater range of services, thus improving the quality of living in these areas. Therefore, entrepreneurship is a good way to generate opportunities for professional development, social and economic integration, maintenance of rural population and the attraction of new residents to these territories (Akgün, Nijikamp, Baycan and Brons, 2010). In deciding how to attract and maintain people in the rural areas, scholars specifically think about young people, partly because of they make up a greater percentage of the population, making them key for the future of rural areas. Muilu and Rusanen (2003) argue that without the youth, these areas cannot remain viable or maintain their long-run economic functions. Thus, Chigunta (2002) agrees that entrepreneurship is an ideal tool to fulfill these functions and a good way to enhance the human capital of youth in rural areas. It provides the environment where youth can actively participate in local society, contribute their talents and visions for the future and develop a sense of commitment and belonging for their communities (Lyngdoh, 2005). The role entrepreneurship plays in rural development is discussed below:

i. Reduction/Alleviation of Rural Poverty

The best cure for poverty in any region of the world lies in encouraging more business activities and start-up of new ventures through entrepreneurship development (Singer, 2006). Rural entrepreneurship contributes to poverty reduction by way of creating employment through the startup of new entrepreneurial businesses or the expansion of existing ones and this in turn increases social wealth by creating new markets, industries, technology, institutional forms, jobs and net increases in real productivity, increase in income which culminates in higher standards of living for the population (Ali and Ali, 2013).

ii. Provision of Employment Opportunities

Rural entrepreneurship is labour intensive and creates large-scale employment opportunities for the rural people. Rural entrepreneurship provides a clear solution to the growing problem of large-scale unemployment and underemployment of rural areas. Development of industrial units in rural areas through rural entrepreneurship has high potential for employment generation and income creation. Through entrepreneurship development programmes, unemployed people can opt for self-employment (Sudipta, 2013). In this respect, several programmes like Youth Entrepreneurship Development Programme (YEDP), Rural

Enterprise Development Initiative (REDI), Rural Women Enterprise Development Programme (RUWEDEP), Youth Entrepreneurship Programme (YEP), General Entrepreneurship Development Programme (GEDP) etc., are in operation in Nigeria to help the potential entrepreneurs.

iii. Improvement of Living Standard in Rural Areas

The standard of living is generally defined as the degree of wealth and material comfort available to a person or community. While in economic terms it is the degree of wealth and material comfort available to a person or community. Therefore, encouraging rural entrepreneurship development will go a long way to improve the standard of living of the rural dwellers through innovations (Adetola, 2016). Rural entrepreneurship has the capacity to increase the literacy rate of rural people. Because with improved income and material comfort, families can send their kids to schools, and even possibility of social infrastructural improvement becomes high. Their education and self-employment will prosper the community, thus improving their standard of living. Entrepreneurial initiative through employment generation leads to increase in income and purchasing power, which is spent on consumption expenditure. Increased demand for goods and services boosts up industrial activity. Large-scale production will result in economies of scale and low cost of production. Modern concept of marketing involves creating a demand and then filling it. New innovative and varying quality products at most competitive prices making common man's life smoother, easier and comfortable are the contribution of entrepreneurial initiative.

Entrepreneurial activities have been found to be capable of making positive impact on the nation's economy and the quality of life of the people (Adejumo, 2001). It is widely believed and understood that entrepreneurship is beneficial to economic growth and development. According to Imafidon (2014), studies have established its positive relationship with stimulation of economic growth; employment generation; and empowerment of the disadvantaged segment of the population, which include women and the poor. Rural entrepreneurship, although a new area of research, has become one of the most significant supportive factors for rural economic development.

iv. Reduction in Rural-Urban Migration Rate

One of the primary objectives of promoting entrepreneurship in developing countries is to mitigate rural-urban drift syndrome (Ihugba, Odii and Njoku, 2013). The migration of rural dwellers to cities in search of 'white-collar' jobs has resulted in congestion, high incidence of crimes, etc. The rural population move towards the urban areas for various reasons including; income generation, searching for good jobs, access to and use of various infrastructural facilities etc. Many young people thus migrate from the rural areas, leaving them for the elderly and aged who may not be active or strong enough to contribute meaningfully to the growth of the economy. Rural entrepreneurship aims at bringing in or

developing infrastructural facilities such as roads, power, bridges etc., in the rural areas. This in turn reduces the gaps and disparities in income between rural and urban areas. Rural entrepreneurship thus reduces or checks the migration of people from rural to urban areas.

v. Balanced Regional Development

Rural entrepreneurship controls the concentration of industry in urban areas and thereby promotes balanced regional development in the economy (Kushalakshi and Raghurama, 2012). By setting small-scale units in remote areas, successful entrepreneurship development programmes can help in achieving balanced regional development. Rural entrepreneurs always look for opportunities in the environment. They capitalize on the opportunities of governmental concessions, subsidies and facilities to set up their enterprises in undeveloped areas, thus entrepreneurship plays a key role in rural development by way of reducing the imbalances and disparities in development among regions.

vi. Conservation and Earnings of Foreign Exchange

Rural entrepreneurship will result in reduced importation of machineries and equipment, raw materials and payment to foreign experts. (Oghojafor, Kuye, Sulaimon and Okonji, 2009). On the other hand, rural entrepreneurship plays significant role in increasing the foreign exchange earnings of the country through export of their produce.

vii. Capital Formation

Entrepreneurs who supply their own and borrowed funds for setting up enterprises are taken as the organizers of factors of production. This results in the process of capital formation. Entrepreneurs by placing profitable business proposition attract investment to ensure private participation in the industrialization process. The otherwise idle savings are channelized for investment in business ventures, which in turn provides return. Again the savings are invested giving a multiplier effect to the process of capital formation (Kumar, 2016). Kushalakshi and Raghurama (2012); Das (2014); in their studies, highlighted other roles played by entrepreneurship in rural development. They include the following:

- *Promotion of artistic activities:* Rural industries also help protect and promote the art and handicrafts, i.e. the age-old rich heritage of the country.
- *Check on social evils:* The growth of rural entrepreneurship reduces the social evils such as poverty, social tensions, atmospheric pollution, the growth of slums and ignorance of inhabitants etc. Entrepreneurship development programmes defuse social tension by providing self-employment careers to the talents of the rural educated youth. More so, Proper entrepreneurship development programmes helps in the reduction of industrial slums by

providing various attractive schemes, incentives, subsidies, etc. in the non-industrialized (rural) areas.

- *Awakening of the rural youth:* Rural entrepreneurship encourages young and promising entrepreneurs to develop and carry out entrepreneurial activities in the rural sector.
- *Proper utilization of local resources:* Rural industries help in the maximum utilization of local resources like raw materials and labour for productive purposes and thus increase productivity. Efficient and effective use of limited resources by the entrepreneurs leads to overall economic development of an area. Entrepreneurship development programmes can help in harnessing the locally available resources by training and educating the prospective entrepreneurs (Sudipta, 2013).
- *Improvement in per capita income:* Rural entrepreneurship generates more output, employment and wealth by exploiting new opportunities, thereby helping to improve the per capita income of rural people.
- *Produces goods of consumers' choice:* Rural industries including cottage and village industries produce goods of individual consumers' taste and preferences, jewelry, artistic products are produced to cater to the needs of different consumer according to their taste, preferences and design.
- *Promote prosperity:* Improvements in local productivity can promote prosperity of the rural areas. With increase in productivity, market opportunities are opened for excess produce, and value chain for products especially agriculture produce are created and income increases. And therefore, standard of living is higher.
- *Decentralized Industrial Development, Better Distribution of Wealth and Investment:* Rural entrepreneurship play imperative role in the economic expansion of the country and results in decentralized industrial development, better distribution of wealth and investment.

The role of entrepreneurship on rural development cannot be overemphasized. It is a strategic development intervention that could facilitate the rural development process. Entrepreneurship can help reduce the challenges faced by the rural populace such as poverty, migration, and unemployment and to boost economic growth.

3.3. Empirical review

A conceptual research work by Nandanwar and College (2011) on the role of rural entrepreneurship in rural development studied dynamic perspective of rural entrepreneurship and also suggested practical suggestions for

development of rural entrepreneurs in India. The authors posited that finding, encouraging and motivating entrepreneurs in rural areas is not an easy proposition. However, to the real entrepreneur looking on the dark side of the situation is fatal. It further stated that optimism is the heart and soul of the entrepreneur. While strategic planning, feasibility and market studies and analysis are necessary parts of new business start-ups, very few real entrepreneurs, the famous and not so famous, waited for a printout to see whether they should launch their new idea.

A paper by Ibrahim (2010) on the role played by rural entrepreneurship in employment generation showed that rural entrepreneurship has high potential for creating new jobs considering the vast resources abundant in the rural areas. Also it further showed that it has the ability to generate more employment considering the fact that it employs more labour-intensive mode of production. Thus, based on the findings the following recommendations were made: That Micro finance banking services should be extended to rural areas as way of alleviating the financial need of rural entrepreneurs. Also government should establish rural entrepreneurship development agency as a way of selection, training and developing potential rural entrepreneurs.

Using secondary data collected from books, journals, website and annual reports, Kushalakshi and Raghurama (2014) found that village or rural industries play an important role in the national economy, particularly in the rural development of Indian villages. Rural entrepreneurship is not only important as a means of generating employment opportunities in the rural areas with low capital cost and raising the real income of the people, but also its contribution to the development of agriculture and urban industries. The research posited that rural entrepreneurship can be considered one of the solutions to reduce poverty, migration, economic disparity, unemployment and develop rural areas and backward regions in India.

Afolabi (2015) examined the evolution and current development of principles and practice of entrepreneurship in Nigeria as well as the effect of entrepreneurship in fostering economic growth and development. The methodology adopted was the narrative textual case study (NTCS) method, which is preferred because of the absence of sequential data related to entrepreneurship and sustainable economic growth in Nigeria. However, interviews were also conducted. Simple percentages, graph and chart were used in analyzing and interpreting the collated secondary data. It was found that entrepreneurship can enhance economic growth and development primarily by generating employment and foster the growth of micro, small and medium enterprises in Nigeria. The study recommended that there should be proper policy coordination and policy stability, reforms in the educational curriculum to prepare students for self-reliance, and fixing the power sector-Nigeria's basic infrastructure.

IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research design utilized in this paper is the survey design. The survey design enabled the researcher ensure systematic collection and presentation of data to give a clear picture of the relationship between rural entrepreneurship and rural development and make sound conclusion. The design was adopted because of its economic nature with samples, which are representative of the population such that findings from the selected sample can be fairly generalized to all the population. The scope of the study is Akpabuyo Local Government Area of Cross River State. According to the National Bureau of Statistics (2007), Akpabuyo has a projected population of 314,750. However, the population for this study was the registered 1500 micro and small-scale businesses within the locality.

Using the Taro Yamane sample size determination formular, the study sampled 316micro and small scale enterprises in the study area. The study employed cluster and simple random sampling technique. Primary data were gathered using a self-administered 4-point Likert Scale questionnaire ranging from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree. The questionnaire had a reliability coefficient was 87.8 percent. The data collected were analyzed descriptively using mean rating. A mean rating above 2.0 indicates a positive response while mean rating below 2.0 indicates a negative response.

V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

A total of 300 questionnaire copies were administered but 287copies (95.7 percent) were retrieved. Table 1 shows the assessment of the role of entrepreneurship in rural development. The first category reveals the responses on improvement in the standard of living. 220 respondents (76.7 percent) strongly agreed that entrepreneurship led to improvement in their standard of living. 38 respondents (13.2 percent) agreed, 12 respondents (4.2 percent) disagreed and 17 respondents (5.9 percent) strongly disagreed. *This gave a mean rating of 3.61 out of a 4 point scale which indicates that*

a good number of the entrepreneurs feel that entrepreneurship improves the standard of living in rural communities.

Table 1 further gives a report on whether alleviation of poverty was a role of entrepreneurship in rural development. 186 respondents making up 64.8 percent of the total respondents strongly agreed. 76 respondents (26.5 percent) agreed; 12 respondents (4.2 percent) disagreed and 13 respondents (4.5 percent) strongly disagreed. *This gave a mean rating of 3.52, which implies that a reasonable number of rural entrepreneurs are of the opinion that entrepreneurship alleviates poverty in their communities.*

Further information revealed in the table is in respect to employment creation as a role of entrepreneurship in rural development. 202 respondents (70.4 percent) strongly agreed; 60 respondents (20.9 percent) agreed; 14 respondents (4.9 percent) disagreed, and 11 respondents (3.8 percent) strongly disagreed. *This gave a mean rating result of 3.58. From this, it can be concluded that majority of the rural entrepreneurs are of the opinion that entrepreneurship creates employment in their communities.*

The next variable on Table 1 sought opinion on whether rural entrepreneurship reduces the rate of rural-urban migration. The Table reveals that 135 respondents (47.0 percent) strongly agreed; 122 respondents (42.5 percent) agreed; 20 respondents (7.0 percent) disagreed; and 10 respondents (3.5 percent) strongly disagreed. *The mean rating of 3.33 is of the implication that a reasonable number of the entrepreneurs surveyed are of the opinion that rural entrepreneurship curbs the rate of rural-urban migration.* The last variable on the table assessed opinion on whether rural entrepreneurship aids the utilization of local resources. It can be seen that 175 respondents (61.0 percent) strongly agreed; 80 respondents (27.9 percent) agreed; 12 respondents (4.2 percent) disagreed; and 20 respondents (7.0 percent) strongly disagreed. *The mean rating of 3.43 indicates that a reasonable number of the entrepreneurs surveyed believe that rural entrepreneurship aids the utilization of local resources.*

TABLE 1 Respondents' opinion on the role of entrepreneurship in rural development

S/N	Variables	SA	A	D	SD	\bar{X}
1.	Improvement in the standard of living	220 (76.7%)	38 (13.2%)	12 (4.2%)	17 (5.9%)	3.61
2.	Alleviation of poverty	186 (64.8%)	76 (26.5%)	12 (4.2%)	13 (4.5%)	3.52
3.	Employment creation	202 (70.4%)	60 (20.9%)	14 (4.9%)	11 (3.8%)	3.58
4.	Reduction of migration to urban areas	135 (47.0%)	122 (42.5%)	20 (7.0%)	10 (3.5%)	3.33
5.	Utilization of local resources	175 (61.0%)	80 (27.9%)	12 (4.2%)	20 (7.0%)	3.43

Source: Field Work (2018).

From the mean rating of the variables, it can be concluded that the most important role played by entrepreneurship in rural economic development is improvement in the standard of living of the locals (\bar{X} = 3.61). The next important role of entrepreneurship is the creation of employment opportunities (\bar{X} = 3.58). The third most important role is alleviation of poverty within the communities (\bar{X} = 3.52). The least roles played by entrepreneurship as highlighted from the result were utilization of local resources and reduction of rural-urban migration. These had mean rating of 3.43 and 3.33 respectively.

The result corroborates the view of Bryden and Hart (2005) which posited that entrepreneurial activity in rural areas help to diversify the economic network and thus avoid dependence on mono-production and is able to offer a greater range of services, thus improving the quality of living in these areas. Also, as stated by Sudipta (2013), rural entrepreneurship provides a clear solution to the growing problem of large-scale unemployment and underemployment of rural areas. Development of industrial units in rural areas through rural entrepreneurship has high potential for employment creation and income generation. Through entrepreneurship development programmes, unemployed people can opt for self-employment.

Entrepreneurial initiative through employment creation leads to increase in income and purchasing power, which is spent on consumption. With improved income and material comfort, families can send their kids to schools, and even the possibility of social infrastructural improvement becomes high. Their education and self-employment will prosper the community, thus improving their standard of living.

VI. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Entrepreneurship plays a critical role in rural economic development such as improvement in the standard of living, creation of employment opportunities, alleviation of poverty, utilization of local resources and reduction of rural-urban migration. Specifically, rural entrepreneurship is an important facilitator of economic development especially in the rural areas. As put by Ezeibe, Diogu, Eze, Chiahah and Nwokenna (2013), 'individuals and institutions promoting rural development now see entrepreneurship as a strategic development intervention that could accelerate the rural development process.' They seem to be a consensus on the urgent need to promote rural enterprises and see entrepreneurship as a tool to improve the quality of life for individuals, families and communities and to sustain a healthy economy and environment. Rural entrepreneurship is not only an important means of improving the socio-economic wellbeing of people in the rural areas with low capital cost and raising the real income of the people, but also essential to the development of agriculture and industries to foster economic growth in any nation.

This paper thus recommends the following measures to foster entrepreneurship in rural areas:

1. Rural entrepreneurship can be encouraged and promoted through the provision of incentives to rural entrepreneurs in the form of tax relief and concession for at least 10 years to encourage them to plough back earnings for scaling and expansion.
2. Infrastructure in rural areas should be developed and maintained as it goes a long way to encourage trade and business transaction within rural communities. Infrastructure such as paved and properly-maintained road and stable electricity will to a large extent reduce expenses and alleviate poverty in rural areas. This will not only improve the socio-economic wellbeing of rural dwellers but also serve as stimuli in boosting the rural economy.

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