



ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND ITS ROLE IN FOSTERING ECONOMIC RECOVERY IN POST-CONFLICT ERA IN NORTH-EAST NIGERIA

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Abstract

This is a position discourse which focuses on the role of entrepreneurship in fostering economic recovery in post-conflict era in North-east Nigeria. The North-eastern part of Nigeria is badly hit by the activities of Boko-haram terrorists who grew wings to the extent of taking over some areas and putting them under their control. The region is however enjoying relative peace at this present time due to the degrading of the terrorists by the Nigerian military troops. This shows that the zone is now in post-conflict era. Entrepreneurship is a tool for societal progress, which has the potential for fostering economic recovery. This paper points out that entrepreneurship could foster economic recovery in post-conflict era in North-east Nigeria because it leads to formation of capital, income generation, job creation, utilization of local resources, competition among producers and distributors of goods and services, export promotion, increase in productivity as well as creativity and innovation. The paper concludes that active engagement in entrepreneurship by all youngsters in the region will help in revamping the economy of the zone. As a way forward, the paper, among others, suggested that the government should endeavour to intensify efforts toward winning the war against terrorism, as this will help the citizens to actively engage in entrepreneurship careers and lifelong learning.

Keywords: *Boko-haram insurgency, Entrepreneurship, Economic recovery, Post-conflict era*

Introduction

The human society is faced with a lot of issues and challenges. These issues and challenges aggravate conflict and pose threats to peace security and stability in the society. This is because they heat up the polity and render the society unsafe for human inhabitation. They are also responsible for displacement of people and battered the economy in the sense that people find it difficult to come out and engage in entrepreneurial activities. In line with these, Edeki and Amaechi (2015) pointed

out that the impact of conflicts is always negative and in Nigeria, there are numerous conflicts which are undoubtedly among the factors responsible for her political and economic instability. In addition to this, Makrop *et al.*, (2015) stressed that insecurity which is an element of conflict makes investment unattractive because it hikes the cost of doing businesses and discourages direct foreign investment. Some of the challenges that lead to conflict in Nigeria include but not limited to unemployment, ethnicity, tribalism, terrorism and fundamentalism, militancy, kidnapping, banditry, youth restiveness, separatist movements and farmers-herders clashes. These crises have devastating effect on the social, economic and political development of Nigeria. For example, deductions from Makrop *et al.*, (2015), Oyinloye (2019) Asanebi *et al.*, (2021) and Dauda (n.d) revealed that the Boko-haram terrorists killed many people, crumbled the entire economy of North-east Nigeria, which led to closure of schools and discourage school enrolment due to series of attacks on schools among which were the kidnapping and killing of students and teachers in Borno and Yobe States. The bandits in North-west Nigeria and some parts of North-central Nigeria also attack people in schools, towns, villages and highways and also abduct people for ransom. In the South-east, the separatist movement championed by the Independent People of Biafra (IPOB) also imposes and enforce a 'sit at home' order which has led to loss of many lives, property and billions of Naira. To corroborate this, Anyadiegwu and Nzekwe (2022) stated that enforcement of sit at home by IPOB resulted into attacks on those who decided to violate the order and weakening of the economy of the South-east region of Nigeria. A study conducted by Amana and Okpoko (2023) also concluded that IPOB's sit at home order has cost Nigeria billions of Naira and led to killing of innocent people. In the same vein, militancy in the Niger Delta has negative impact on oil exploration and mining as well as direct foreign investment, while the Yoruba nation agitators are also threats to peace, stability and economic prosperity in South-west, Nigeria.

It is important to note that no country is completely peaceful. But it is expected that crisis would be followed with peace and stability. It is therefore good news to note that North-east Nigeria which was badly hit by the Boko-haram terrorists is now enjoying relative peace and security which were absent prior to 2015 election due to the degrading of Boko-haram terrorists by the Nigerian military as well as recapturing of some areas under the control of terrorists by the military. This shows that the region is now in a post-conflict era which is a period of peace or relative peace after a period of conflict or insecurity. According to Ademiluyi (2007) entrepreneurship focuses on generation of business ideas, identifying investment opportunities, making decisions for utilizing the opportunities, developing organisational objectives, carrying out marketing research and survey, bringing together resources, bearing risks and uncertainties, innovation and diversification. Gidado (2019) also stated that entrepreneurship is a product of risk bearing ability which leads to establishment of business based on identified opportunity in order to make profit. On the hand, economic recovery comes up when an economy bounces back from recession and start expanding for progress and prosperity.

From the foregoing, it obvious that entrepreneurship has the potentials for stimulating economic recovery in post conflict era in all human societies. This is because it could lead to economic prosperity which is made difficult by conflict through encouraging productivity, income generation, infrastructural development, employment generation and proper management of available resources. The objective of this paper is therefore to bring to the fore, the role of entrepreneurship in fostering economic recovery in post-conflict era in North-east Nigeria.

Conceptual Clarification

Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship is as old as history of exchange of commodity in human societies. This explains why Sangodapo (2021) said that entrepreneurship is traced to the period of trade by barter. According to Mamman (2020), entrepreneurship is made up of three basic elements namely; the context in which an opportunity comes up or is created, competencies for identifying and utilizing the opportunity and the ability of turning the opportunity to success through converting it into a business. In line with this, Sangodapo (2021) reported that entrepreneurship has to do with willingness, ability and desire of individuals to seek out for fortunes in form of opportunities, set up and run enterprises successfully and profitably. In the same vein, a deduction from Ojo and Uwagwu (2020) revealed that entrepreneurship has to do with bearing the risk of establishing a business in order to pursue an opportunity through creativity, innovation, hard work and applying managerial capabilities to drive in success. Looking at the aforementioned definitions in relation to entrepreneurship, one could conclude that it is a tool for bringing about positive change and progress in the society. This is because it uses hard work, creativity, innovation and managerial competence to enhance the accomplishment of entrepreneurial goals. It however starts with identification of viable business opportunities, followed with abilities to bear risks of setting up businesses despite the uncertainties in the business environment in order to turn dreams into realities, be rewarded with profit and see to the fact the entrepreneurial efforts bring about a multiplier effects in the society.

Economic Recovery

Economic recovery is synonymous with economic improvement. According to The Central Bank of Nigeria in Adebisi (2019), it is the period in which demand and other macroeconomic indicators start rising thereby making the economy to witness increase in investment and output of goods and services. In addition to this, a deduction from Investopedia (2021) revealed that it is a period that comes after economic downturn and it is characterised with sustained improvement in business activities which is manifested by increase in gross domestic product and income as well as reduction in unemployment. From the foregoing, it could be seen that economic recovery has to do with positive change in the economy after a period(s) of backwardness that led to contraction of the economy. Economic recovery therefore revamps the economy and repositions it for better which will consequently lead to boom.

Post-conflict Era

As put forward by Morit *et al.*, (2023), post-conflict era begins when an armed conflict between countries or within a country comes at an end. Frère and Wilen (2015) are however of the view the term “post-conflict” is not easy to define because it may be difficult to determine the end of a conflict and the beginning of post-conflict era in a society. The authors further stated that the concept is highly politicized and may amount to taking a high risk of falling back into conflict. This because a society that is branded as being in post-conflict phase is still fragile but is not considered as requiring urgent attention. Based on this, donors may decrease or withdraw donations, international community may withdraw its presence and the government may in an attempt at establishing its position give premature quit notice to the international community and the Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and these does not mean that all forms of conflicts are over. In line with these, the authors suggested that it is more appropriate to see the post-conflict era as a situation in which a society lies along a transition continuum where significant successes are taken to be signs of lasting peace.

Entrepreneurship and Economic Recovery in Post-Conflict Era

In attempt to define entrepreneurship, Uwadiogwu, Mohammed and Oliver (2017) reported that some writers are of the view that it is all about risk taking and bearing. A study conducted by Nebo and Gidado (2016) also revealed that risk bearing is a stimulant to creativity and economic development in Nigeria. This implies that entrepreneurship which leads people into risk bearing is a potent tool for turning an economy that has been battered by conflict into recovery in the post-conflict era. Furthermore, Gonzalez (n.d) was of the position that entrepreneurship and economic recovery work hand in hand, while Toromade (n.d) posited that entrepreneurs who are the practitioners of entrepreneurship play significant roles in economic recovery. Entrepreneurship could therefore play prominent roles in fostering economic recovery in post-conflict era in North-east Nigeria because:

Entrepreneurship leads to formation of capital that is required for business activities. To support this assertion, Atlas-Ameh (2016) pointed out that it provides money and other categories of capital that are needed for business. To achieve this, entrepreneurship encourages people to develop the habit of saving which could be would be invested in promising areas that could give rise to income. This has the potential of taking North-east Nigeria into recovery in the post-conflict era. This is because, apart from the savers that can use their money for investment, the money lenders and financial institutions can make them available to investors who would use them productively and reposition the economy of the region to the path of prosperity.

Entrepreneurship generates income for the household, business and the government. In line with this, Atlas-Ameh (2016) stated that it creates wealth through opening up new markets for satisfying newly identified opportunities, realization of profit by entrepreneurs and revenue generation by the government in forms of taxes, fees, fines, licenses and royalties. These could help in revamping the economy of North-east Nigeria because of their multiplier effects. It is also worthy of note that generation of income is a weapon for equitable redistribution of income which makes more disposable income available to households for satisfying their needs thereby calling for increase in productivity and its positive effects on the society.

Entrepreneurship is a tool for job creation. A deduction from Emmanuel (2015) showed that employment generation deals with the ability of a system to create additional job(s) for job seekers. Adeyemi and Titiloye (2014) also pointed out that entrepreneurship creates jobs in different sectors of the economy. To corroborate this, Atlas-Ameh (2016) was of the view that it enhances skills acquisition which could create jobs in the service, commercial and manufacturing sectors. Taking a good look at these, it is obvious that entrepreneurship could lead to economic recovery. This is because it reduces unemployment and thoughts for unwholesome activities which are given rise to by idleness. People would therefore be able to engage in productive activities without fear and contribute to economic prosperity.

Entrepreneurship encourages the utilization of local resources for economic prosperity. According to Adeyemi and Titiloye (2014) and Emmanuel (2015), it stimulates people to make do with local resources in agricultural and business sectors thereby reducing overdependence on foreign materials. In addition to these, Atlas-Ameh (2016) was of the conviction that it leads to development of local technology as well as harnessing local skills and acumen. These result into development of enterprises, better methods for quality improvement, increased and sustained output which are indicators of economic recovery.

Entrepreneurship stimulates competition among producers and distributors of goods and services. It is worthy of note that competition is a key factor in entrepreneurship. It leads to provision of quality goods and service, good customer relation and increase in productivity for the



purpose of satisfying the customers. According to Adeyemi and Titiloye (2014), competition is an instrument for change in the sense that it confronts consumers with alternatives which comes in forms of price differentiation, credit terms, inter-industry struggles as well as improvement of goods and services. It also discourages monopoly and gives room for growth and development of new businesses. Emmanuel (2015) also stated that competition leads to creativity. It is therefore obvious that entrepreneurship could play vital role in economic recovery of North-east Nigeria in post-conflict era because varieties of products will be made available to the consumers in different qualities and affordable prices which will consequently boost the economy and reposition it back to good days preceding the conflict era.

Entrepreneurship is a stimulant to export promotion. This is because it encourages large scale production beyond the need of the local market. It could therefore lead to economic recovery because it would increase the Gross National Product (GNP) of a society. Based on these, Adeyemi and Titiloye (2014) were of the view that entrepreneurship is responsible for production and pushing of high quality products in large quantity into the world markets by countries like Japan, South Korea, China and India. Emmanuel (2015) also asserted that this act will help in conserving foreign exchange for a country. It is also worthy of note that it increases foreign exchange earnings for a country. North-eastern part of Nigeria shares international boundary with Chad Republic, Republic of Cameroon and Niger Republic which makes it to be strategically located. It therefore follows that relative peace in the post-conflict era will lead to the recovery of the zone because goods and services could be exported to the neighbouring countries.

Entrepreneurship leads to increase in productivity. This owes to the fact that it increases output of goods and services. It is however expected that it will be achieved with little input. According to Adeyemi and Titiloye (2014), productivity is the capacity for producing more goods and services with little input of labour and other factors of production. This shows that it is a tool for economic growth which is an expansion in productive capacity of a country. The achievement of this feat could therefore foster economic recovery in North-east in the post-conflict era.

Entrepreneurship stimulates creativity and innovation. This implies that it encourages people to be creative and innovative. Creativity deals with the capability for using brainstorming to process information which results into something new, original and meaningful (Aruwa in Nebo and Gidado, 2016). Innovation on the other hand is the process of coming up with something that is fundamentally different to those in existence so as to meet the need of the consumers (Emmanuel, 2015). From the foregoing, it can be deduced that creativity and innovation lead to development of new products, improvement on existing ones or introduction of new brands that can compete with those in the market. They can also bring about better marketing, customer relation management and the entire management of the business. The duo could therefore play the roles of enhancing better customer satisfaction through provision of quality products that would attract customers' attentions. This situation would thus stimulate economic recovery in North-east Nigeria in post-conflict era in the sense that it would pave way for increase in production and exchange which have the chance of revamping the battered economy.

Conclusion

Conflict is a threat to peace and stability in human societies. Nigeria is experiencing numerous security challenges including but not limited to the activities of Boko-haram terrorists, banditry, militancy and separatist movements. The North-eastern part of the country has been devastated by Boko-haram terrorists since 2009 when they engage in open and physical confrontation with the Nigerian security agents. Subsequently, the group grew wings and took over some communities. The region is however experiencing relative peace which was absent prior to



2015 elections owing to decimation of the group by Nigerian troops and vigilantes. This implies that the region is now in post-conflict era. Entrepreneurship is a tool for societal progress and this paper established that it can play significant roles in fostering economic recovery in post-conflict era in North-east Nigeria. The implication of these is that active engagement in entrepreneurship by all youngsters in the region would help towards improving her economy and make the zone a safe place to live.

Recommendations

Based on the issues raised earlier and the conclusion drawn, the following recommendations are put forward:

- i. The government should endeavour to intensify its efforts in winning the war against terrorism in order to make the citizens to engage in productive activities without any fear.
- ii. Enabling environment should be created for entrepreneurship development.
- iii. The citizens should endeavour to actively engage in entrepreneurship careers.
- iv. The government and NGOs should endeavour to give financial assistance to those that are willing to become enterprising individuals.
- v. Genuinely repentant terrorists should be equipped with entrepreneurial skills and be encouraged to engage in business.
- vi. Educational institutions should make their entrepreneurship centres to be functional.
- vii. Tax holiday should be given to entrepreneurs in order make them to have access to money that could be ploughed-back into the business.
- viii. There should be school-industry partnership. This is because entrepreneurship backed up by research is more effective for economic recovery.

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