



ANALYSIS OF ENTREPRENEURIAL SKILLS AND JOB PREFERENCE AMONG UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS OF AGRICULTURE: EVIDENCE FROM FEDERAL UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY MINNA, NIGER STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Against the backdrop of the challenges bedevilling the African youths, including limited job opportunities, skills limitations and mismatch, the study used agriculture students of the Federal University of Technology Minna, Niger State, Nigeria to unearth the entrepreneurial skills acquired by students; assess Students' Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES) and ascertain their job preferences. The study deployed mixed analytical tools comprising descriptive analyses, Likert perception procedure and Probit model. The study established that only 4.3% of the students attended technical schools, 42.1% chose agriculture as first choice, 95.0% never attended career sessions on entrepreneurship and agribusiness, 68.9% had previous work experiences, 14.8% were previously involved in agro-based endeavours, 90.9% liked agriculture as a profession and only 49.3% affirmed that they acquired agro-based skills after SIWES. Based on Likert weighted means of 4.26, 4.49 and 3.87, the students perceived SIWES as useful, relevant and adequate, respectively; and 86.6% preferred agro-based jobs. The key challenges to effective acquisition of skills during the SIWES year were difficulties in securing placement and inadequate funding. The study concluded that the type of schools attended and perception of relevance of curriculum were drivers of agro-based job preference. The study recommended regular sensitization at the pre-tertiary education levels on the opportunities that abound in the agriculture profession; formation of agro-based entrepreneurship networks and partnership with established entrepreneurship outfits with innovative and sustainable approaches; regular conduct of skill gap analysis to provide direction to relevant and trending 21st Century skills-set, and building capacity for feasible agribusiness plans and feasibility studies.

Keywords: Agriculture-based undergraduates; Entrepreneurial skills; Job preference; 21st century Skills-set; Students' Industrial Work Experience Scheme; Youths.