

Review Article

African youth and professional career choice evidence from African students in China

Pene Zongabiro Nina Pelagie*

Faculty of Economics and Management Sciences, University of Ngaoundere, Cameroon

*Corresponding Author

Pene Zongabiro Nina Pelagie

Abstract: The study aims at finding out African students' motivations for professional career choice. To achieve this goal, a sample of 148 respondents studying and living in China was used for the survey. Descriptive statistics were used to find out three types of professional careers and theory of planned behaviour was used to analyse attitude of African students regarding the future job occupations. The results revealed that African students in China are more willing to undertake entrepreneurial career for self-employment purpose, the study also revealed one special professional career 'Employee-Entrepreneur career'. The study concludes that; students' choice depends of their motivations towards respective career.

Keywords: African students, professional career, self-employment, entrepreneur career.

1. INTRODUCTION

Researches in the field of entrepreneurship are many: some focus on entrepreneurs' personal traits (Clelland 1961), some researches relate entrepreneurship to the notion of organization (Bygrave, and Hofer 1991) while others focus on enterprise creation (Verstraete 2003). In the field of economics, entrepreneurship is defined from an entrepreneur's perspective and most of these researches consider an entrepreneur as someone who stimulates economic growth through innovation (Schumpeter 1939, and Drucker 1985) and through the creation of new products and service (Dejardin 2000; Shane and Venkataraman 2000). The importance of entrepreneurial activities has led many researchers to predict individual entrepreneurial intention through the Ajzen's Intention Model (Ajzen 1991) and Entrepreneurial Event Model (Shapero, and Sokol 1982). Most of these researches focus on the impact of education or entrepreneurship training programs on students' entrepreneurial intention (Boissin *et al.*, 2008; Liñán 2004, and Zhao *et al.*, 2005). African students are studying and living in China; ranked the second largest economy in the world: What influence could the Chinese economic environment have on African students' professional career choice after the return? The purpose of this study is to find out the motivations

towards the choice of respective professional careers and what impact the students' choice of the futures professional occupations could have on African economic development after their return to their respective countries. This paper is organized such as follows: literature review examines the notions of entrepreneurship and unemployment, the theory of planned behaviours and students professional career choice, empirical research found out three categories of professional careers among African students living and studying in China. Finally, findings are discussed and then the conclusion of the study is presented last.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Entrepreneurship and Unemployment

The anxiety of looking for jobs after their graduation is one of the factors that influence youths' choice of job occupation. As reported by the World Bank/Africa development indicators (2011), in Africa, 7 to 10 million young people entering the labour force each year. So, entrepreneurship is the way to jobs for African youths.

Concerning entrepreneurship in Africa, Global Monitor Entrepreneurship reported that most entrepreneurs in the sub-Saharan Africa region undertake entrepreneurial activities for a necessity

Quick Response Code



Journal homepage:

<http://www.easpublisher.com/easjebm/>

Article History

Received: 09.07.2019

Accepted: 19.07.2019

Published: 09.08.2019

Copyright © 2019 The Author(s): This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY-NC 4.0) which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium for non-commercial use provided the original author and source are credited.

DOI: 10.36349/easjebm.2019.v02i08.003

driven motive, meanwhile most activities are developed for survival reasons and it's largely dependent on the agricultural sector (Herrington and Kelley 2013).

Indeed, some researchers supported that the development of small business activities and the important part of informal sector in most Africa countries is due in part to self-employment purpose (Alby *et al.*, 2013, Kayanula and Quartey 2000, and Daniels 1999). In the same line, Millan *et al.*, (2010) asserted that self-employment is an alternative to unemployment.

Concerning the motivations towards entrepreneurship, Shapero and Sokol, (1982) asserted that there are some motives or entrepreneurial events such as: loss of job, migration, opportunities that push individuals to undertake entrepreneurship acts.

2.2. Students and professional career choice

Concerning the professional career choice of students, some researches focus on the pre- decision stage that strive to understand students' attitudes regarding career choice through the analysis of students' demographic characteristics and social environment (Krueger and Carsrud 1993, and Kolvereid, 1996a). On students' intentions towards entrepreneur career; Boissin *et al.*, (2008) asserted that French students' choice to pursue one career depend on the expectations they have towards a given type of professional career (employee career or entrepreneur career). In the same vein, Tounes (2006) supported that individual entrepreneurial intention is influenced by some elements in the environment such as: socio-cultural, political and economic factors. Liñán (2004) found out that training programs on entrepreneurship have a positive influence on student's choice of becoming entrepreneurs, while Zhao *et al.*, (2005) asserted that gender variables also influence students' professional career choice and they found out that male students appear to be more willing to undertake entrepreneur career than female students.

The above authors argued that some factors including social, cultural, economics, training programmes have a certain influence on student choice of the type of job occupation. Majority of African students in China are sponsored by the Chinese governments' scholarship program while a few are self-sponsored students. These students acquire academic knowledge and technical skills during their study period; but also being in an economic environment with a lot of developmental business activities around their respective campuses; all these factors could have a certain impact on students' choice of professional careers.

2.3. Theory of Planned Behaviour and students' professional career choice

The theory of planned behaviour is also used to predict and understand students' behaviour towards professional careers such as becoming entrepreneurs (Boissin *et al.*, 2008, and Tounes 2006). The theory of planned behaviour (Ajzen 1991) postulates that: the intention to perform the behaviour is influenced by three independent components such as: attitudes which refer to individuals' beliefs, while subjective norms refer to social environment (parents, friends) and perceived behavioural control is a degree to perform or not the behaviour. This study was based on the theory of planned behaviour, but focused on attitudes as main determinant variable of student behaviour towards the choice of professional career. According to Ajzen and Fishbein (2000: 2), "an attitude is best considered to be a person's degree of favourable or unfavourable with respect to psychological object". The intention model assumes that attitude is an individual positive or negative belief to perform behaviour and attitude is assumed to have a direct effect on behavioural intention (Ajzen, 1991). African students' entrepreneurial career choice depends on the beliefs that they have in favour of respective professional careers (entrepreneur or employee) and these beliefs are measured from their motivations or from their perceptions regarding entrepreneur career or employee career.

3. EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

3.1. Data Collection and Analysis

The study was based on the survey carried among 148 African students living and studying in China by Wang and Pene (2014) in January and February 2014. These authors choice of respondents was guided by two criteria; the graduation year and the time of their return to Africa where they will face professional career choice. The researchers used questionnaires to collect the desired data and A Census and Survey Processing System (CSPRO 4.1) Software was used for data entry, while Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS17) was used for descriptive statistics. This study empirical analysis was made based on these descriptive statistics results.

3.2. RESULTS

3.2.1. Sample Characteristic

As earlier noticed, the survey involved 148 respondents, and out of this number 88 were male while 60 were female. All study levels were included (Bachelors 39.9 %, Masters 49.3 % and Doctorates 6.1%). Students were largely majoring in medicine (37.2%) engineering science (23.0%) and economics (10.1%). Table1 presents sample characteristic.

Table 1: Sample Characteristics:

Variables	Respondents	Percentage in percent
Gender	Male	88
	Female	60
Age	Minimum	17
	Maximum	45
	Average	26.60
Study Level	Bachelors	59
	Master	73
	Doctorate	9
	Others	7
Major(Specialty)	Medicine	55
	Engineering Sciences	34
	Economics	15
	Others majors	44
Home country	North Africa	5
	West Africa	49
	Central Africa	37
	East Africa	31
	South of Africa	26
Location in China(City)	North of China (13 cities)	122
	South of China (07 cities)	26

Source: Wang and Pene (2014) survey

3.2.2. Professional Career Choice

The choice of professional career was measured based on the question: *After your return would you like to be an employee or an entrepreneur?* The results revealed that 54.1 percent of the

respondents want to be entrepreneurs, while 32.4 percent want to be employees and 13.5 percent want to be both employees and entrepreneurs. Table 2 presents different types of professional career.

Table 2: Professional career choice

Items	Percentage (%)	Effect on choice (%)
Professional career choice		
Entrepreneur	80	54.1
Employee	48	32.4
Both: Entrepreneur and Employee	20	13.5

Source: Wang and Pene (2014) survey

3.2.3. Motivations for the Career Choice

Motivations were measured from the question: *What is/are your motivation(s) for this choice of career?* The results revealed that for each type of professional career choice, students have various motivations: students who want to be entrepreneurs are motivated by variables such as follows: to create my own jobs (67.7%), to have power (44.4%), to take risks (64.6 %) and to implement creativity (87.9%).

Students who want to be employees are motivated by variables such as follows: to have a stable job (94.1%), to have a stable income (69.1%), to have little stressful jobs (33.8%), to have a simple and less complex jobs (47.1%) and to have a job that requires few responsibilities (42.6%). Table 3 presents motivations for the career choice.

Table3: Motivations towards career choice

Items		Frequencies	Percentage (%)	Effect on choice (%)
Motivations Each category includes those who want to be both.				
Entrepreneurial career (99 respondents)				
to be my own boss	Yes	67	67.7	67.7
	No	32	32.3	
to have power	Yes	44	44.4	44.4
	No	55	55.6	
to take risks	Yes	64	64.6	64.6
	No	35	35.4	
to implement creativity	Yes	87	87.9	87.9
	No	12	12.1	
Employee career (68 respondents)				
to have a stable job	Yes	64	94.1	94.1
	No	4	5.9	
to have a stable income	Yes	47	69.1	69.1
	No	21	30.9	
to have a little stressful job	Yes	23	33.8	33.8
	No	45	66.2	
to have a simple and less complex job	Yes	32	47.1	47.1
	No	36	52.9	
to have a job that requires few responsibility	Yes	29	42.6	42.6

Source: Wang and Pene (2014) survey

4. DISCUSSION

The results revealed three types of professional career choices among African students. Some students want to be entrepreneurs; others want to be employees while others want to be both entrepreneurs and employees.

4.1. Entrepreneurial Career

African students who chose entrepreneurial career¹ are students who believe that they have academic background and technical skills that can make them successful. Most of these students are majoring in economics and engineering sciences. Their main motivations for this choice are to implement their creativity (87.9 %) and to create their own jobs (67.7 % of respondents from this category). Students from this category want to avoid the challenge of unemployment after their return, so they want to be self-employed. Africa has a large number of youth populations that means labour force but also, unemployment challenges (World Bank: Africa development indicators, 2011). These findings are in line with other researches on individual professional career choice as supported by Berglann *et al.*, (2011) and Millan *et al.*, (2010) who argued that some individuals undertake entrepreneurial activities to escape unemployment. Self-employment is the main motivation for entrepreneurial career among African students as entrepreneurial career is perceived as a suitable alternative to unemployment.

¹ In this study Entrepreneurial career refer to someone engaged in entrepreneurial activities such as owner of a company or businessman.

Students who are more willing to be entrepreneurs also want to implement their creativity, this finding is in line with other researches on student entrepreneurial intention (Liñán, 2004 and Tounes, 2006) concluded that students who are familiar with entrepreneurship notions (training programs) are more willing to undertake an entrepreneurial career. Students in this category are the future entrepreneurs that could contribute to Africa's economic growth, only if African governments create suitable economic environments that will allow those students to return and set up companies. These findings are in line with Acemoglu *et al.*, (2003) who wrote that a suitable institutional environment contribute to economic development as seen in Rwanda's recent business reforms in favour of entrepreneurship development (World Bank 2013) is an example of how governments rules and regulations influencing entrepreneurial activities.

4.2. Employee Career

African students who want **Employee career**² are not familiar with entrepreneurship notions such as production and enterprise creation. Most of them are majoring in medicine. They chose to be employees because they want to have a stable job (94.1 % of respondents from this category) and stable income (69.1 % of respondents from this category). This results are in line with Boissin *et al.*, (2008) who argued that students that look for stable job and stable income are not interested in entrepreneurial career. Some students want

² Employee career refer to someone who is working in private sector or employing in public institutions

to be employees because there are on Chinese scholarship that was awarded through their governments hence after their return they have to work in public institutions of their respective countries as a payback for the scholarship.

4.3. Employee – Entrepreneur Career

African students who want **Employee – Entrepreneur career**, are those who think that after their graduation they will not have enough resources to start entrepreneurial activities. So they want to be employed, in order to make savings from the salaries necessary to finance entrepreneurial activities later. For this category of students, lack of financial resources explains their choice to be both employees and entrepreneurs. This finding is in line with Kauffman (2005) and Alby *et al.*, (2013) who argued that financial support constitutes an obstacle to entrepreneurship in most Africa countries. And also support the views of Franco (2005) who argued that individuals with more financial resources are more willing to start entrepreneurial activities than individuals who lack financial resources. These students' choice of employee-entrepreneurial career is in line with Hyytinen and Maliranta (2008) who asserted that most employees develop the idea of becoming entrepreneurs while working. Some of students want to be employees but at the same time they want to create business activities in collaboration with some business partners.

5. CONCLUSION

This study on motivation towards a professional career choice by the African students in China used descriptive statistics to analyse the motivations towards professional career choice. The results revealed that the choice of a given career is made based on beliefs that students have in favour of respective career: students familiar with entrepreneurship notions (students majoring in Economics and Engineering Sciences) believe that they can succeed in entrepreneur career while those students who believe that they need enough resources for entrepreneur career choose employee career. This study had some limitations, such as a focus on students' motivations as the main determinants of professional career choice while other variables such as students' parents' social background that could also give more results were not considered. But despite these limitations the results are still pertinent. The research shows that African students studying and living in China are more willing to be entrepreneurs because they want to create jobs for themselves by applying their creativity. Furthermore, the study revealed that "Employee-Entrepreneur career" is one type of professional career that students are willing to undertake after their return. These findings call upon African governments to create attractive economic environment that will motivate these students to create companies after their return to their respective countries and contribute to Africa's economic development.

REFERENCES

1. Acemoglu, D., Johnson, S., Robinson, & Thaicharoen, Y. (2003). Institutional causes macroeconomics symptoms: volatility, crises and growth. *Journal of Monetary economics*, 50(1), 49-123.
2. Ajzen, I. (1991). Theory of Planned Behavior. *Organizational behavior and human decision processes*, 50(2), 179-211. Retrieved from: <http://people.umass.edu/aizen/publications.html> (Accessed December 04 2013).
3. Ajzen, I., & Fishbein, M. (2000). Attitude and Attitude Behavior Relation: Reasoned and automatic processes. *European Review of Social Psychology*, 11(1), 1-33. Retrieved from: <http://people.umass.edu/aizen/publications.html> (accessed December 04 2013).
4. Alby, P., Auriol, E., & Nguimkeu, P. (2013). Social barriers to entrepreneurship in Africa: the forced mutual help hypothesis. <http://www.cmi.no/file/?2371>. Accessed 10 June 2014.
5. Berglann, H., Moen, E.R., Roed, K., & Skogstrom, J. F. (2011). Entrepreneurship: Origins and returns. *Labour Economics*, 18(2), 180-193.
6. Boissin J. P., Chollet, B., & et Lemin, S. (2008). Les croyances des étudiants envers la création d'entreprise : Un état de lieux (Beliefs of students toward entrepreneurship). *Revue Française de Gestion*, 11(180), 25-43, doi: 10.3166/rfg.180.25-43.
7. Bygrave, W.D., & Hofer C.W. (1991). Theorizing about Entrepreneurship. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 16(2), 13-22.
8. Drucker, P. (1985). *Les Entrepreneurs* (The entrepreneurs). Editions Tendances Actuelles: Expansion Hachette, Jean Claude Lattes.
9. Franco, A. (2005). Employee entrepreneurship: recent research and futures directions. *Handbooks of Entrepreneurship Research*, 81-96, doi: 10.1.1.210.3122.
10. Hyytinen, A., & Maliranta, M. (2008). When Do Employees Leave Their Job for Entrepreneurship?. *The Scandinavian Journal of Economics*, 110(1), 1-21.
11. Kauffman. C. (2005). SMEs financing in Africa. OCDE development centre: Policy Insights N° 7. Retrieved from <http://www.oecd.org/dev/34908457.pdf>. Accessed 2nd February 2014.
12. Kolvereid, L. (1996a). Organizational employment versus self-employment: Reasons for career choice employment. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 20(3), 23-32.
13. Krueger, N., & Carsrud, A. (1993). Entrepreneurial intentions: Applying the Theory of Planned Behavior, *Entrepreneurship and Regional Development*. 5, 315-330.
14. Liñán, F. (2004). Intention based model of entrepreneurial education. *Piccola Impresa/Small*

- Business, 3(1), 11-35. Retrieved from: <http://congreso.us.es/gpyde/DOWNLOAD/a9.pdf> (accessed on April 6 2014).
15. Dejardin, M. (2000). Entrepreneuriat et croissance: une conjonction evidemment favorable (Entrepreneurship and growth: a favorable conjunction?). *Reflets et perspectives de la vie économique*, 39(4), 19-32.
 16. McClelland, D.C. (1961). *The achieving society*. London: The Free Press.
 17. Millan, J.M., Congregado, E., & Roman, C. (2010). Determinants of self-employment and their implications on entrepreneurial policy effectiveness. *Lecturas de Economia*, 72, 45-76.
 18. Schumpeter, J.A. (1939). *Business Cycle*. New York: Mc Graw-Hill.
 19. Shaper, A., & Sokol, L. (1982). The social dimension of entrepreneurship. Kent C.A., Sexton D.L & Vesper K.H. (Eds.). *The Encyclopaedia of entrepreneurship*, Englewood Cliffs NJ, Prentice-Hall, 72-90.
 20. Shane, S., & Venkataraman, S. (2000). The promise of entrepreneurship as a field of research. *Academic of Management Review* (25) 1: 217-226.
 21. Tounes, A. (2006). L'intention entrepreneuriale des étudiants : le cas français (Students entrepreneurship intention : France case). *La Revue des Sciences de Gestion*, 3(219), 57-65.
 22. Verstraete, T. (2003). Proposition d'un cadre théorique pour la recherche en entrepreneurial (A proposition of theoretical framework for entrepreneurship research). Editions de l'ADREG. Retrieved from: http://www.airepme.org/images/File/Livres/adreg_07.pdf (accessed April 14 2014).
 23. World Bank. (2011). Africa Development Indicators. Retrieved from
 24. http://data.worldbank.org/sites/default/files/adi_2011-web.pdf. (Accessed April 14 2014).
 25. World Bank. (2013). Doing Business: smarter regulations for small and medium -size enterprises. Retrieved from <http://www.Doingbusiness.org> (accessed on April 14 2014).
 26. Zhao, H., Seibert, S.E., & Hills, G.E. (2005). The mediating role of self-efficacy in the development of entrepreneurial intentions. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 90(6), 1265-1272, doi: 10.1037/0021-9010.90.6.1265.