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**ABSTRACT**

<b>Title</b>	<b>ENTREPRENEURSHIP AS A VIABLE CAREER CHOICE FOR AFRICAN YOUTHS</b>
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**ENTREPRENEURSHIP AS A VIABLE CAREER CHOICE FOR AFRICAN YOUTHS**

This paper will present pilot studies that investigate the entrepreneurial heuristics of young nascent African entrepreneurs.

All over the world entrepreneurship is linked to employment generation, innovation and economic growth, but entrepreneurship has been downplayed in Africa over the past 30 years (Marsden 1992). Fundamental to Africa's problems is high youth (15-35 years olds) unemployment, and integrating more youths into the small business sector can contribute to alleviating the myriad of issues associated with unemployment, underemployment and poverty. Yet, specific research into the field of youth entrepreneurship in the African context is limited or non-existent (Chigunta 2002; Chigunta et al. 2005; Schoof 2006). While entrepreneurship may not be the total solution to youth unemployment, it is an innovative strategy that can personally and professional develop vibrant individuals and raise the entrepreneurial potential of young people. In addition, risk taking personalities can be created through targeted support and development that communicate the reality that risk and uncertainty are 'perennial facts of life' (Farley 2000, p235).

Current entrepreneurship literature is selective and restrictive, concentrating on western/masculine society with minimum entrepreneurship research recognising gender, class and race, and this has led to practical problems (Ogbor 2000). The case with Africa is the emphasis on constraints and the environment, but the external environment's influence is ambivalent, and too much concentration on its barriers takes away from understanding the pragmatic micro actions that entrepreneurs employ to succeed (Manimala 1992). These insights are necessary so youths can be trained to recognize and develop business opportunity, because simply removing environmental barriers will not reduce poverty (Farley 2000). Furthermore, approaches used to create businesses in West Africa found that exporting business creation techniques used in developed countries, often proved inappropriate, thus

the African entrepreneur's approach to starting and sustaining businesses should be studied, and their lessons applied so that those with limited or absolutely no access to resources could learn how to start and operate in environments of scarcity, and even abundance (Diamonde 1990).

This paper will present findings from a pilot study of four African nascent entrepreneurs, who have been interviewed using the critical incident technique (CIT) methodology. Their narratives reveal their career reasons, entrepreneurial heuristics, key influences and critical challenges as they launch and operate a business in Africa.

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Beeka is the Managing Director of Ariebp Nigeria Limited, a firm of entrepreneurship trainers and entrepreneurship consultants to the African Business Roundtable (ABR) a foremost continent-wide association of businesses and business leaders. She is the pioneer of the Encourage Youth Entrepreneurs (E.Y.E) campaign, which offers free coaching and mentoring sessions to Nigerians and Co- founder of Leaders & Entrepreneurs Advanced Development Ltd/Gte (L.E.A.D) a non-profit dedicated to research, sourcing and developing entrepreneurship materials for Africans, a recent project is Hausa entrepreneurship training, coaching and mentoring for women and youths.

Beeka is the author of "A Practical Guide: How to Start and Grow Your Own Business" and "Mu Koyi Sana'a" (Hausa Entrepreneurship book) and a member of the Chartered Management Institute, U.K.

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