Chapter 1

Introduction and Overview

ABSTRACT

The chapters in this book are intended to bring together new thinking and insights to the fields of ethnic entrepreneurship, diaspora and transnational entrepreneurship, and other allied disciplines. Although the chapters are varied, they are arranged into three thematic phases to offer essential resources to researchers, practitioners, and policymakers. Hence, each chapter is projected to stand alone, advancing ample perspective on a particular topic in ethnic entrepreneurship genre. In consequence, there might be occasional repetition or overlap between the chapters that might affect the anticipated “storytelling” effect of the book. Chapter 1 begins by stating the purpose of this book and the gaps it aims to fill. The succeeding section delineates the Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) and highlights the inconsistency in its demarcations. This is followed by a brief commentary on the concept of imperialism, the aim of which is to draw attention to the foundation of the link between Black Africans and the European colonizers as a foretaste to the “economy” of Black Africans’ immigration to Europe. Next is the section on the British society, which is an attempt to contextualize the historicity of Black Africans in the UK, followed by the description and the outlines of the other chapters in the book. Lastly, the points of departure are specified to reduce confusion and clear up anomalies that may exist in the usage of terms and phrases. In addition, each chapter has dedicated columns for definitions of concepts and theories used. Case insights’ boxes are also included – they serve to emphasize the theme(s) discussed in the chapter.
THE RATIONALE FOR THE BOOK

Over a period of time Africans are scattered across several global locations in the diaspora, and the UK has remained a primary destination for the African migrants (Binaisa, 2015). The objective of this book is to raise the profile of Black African entrepreneurship in the UK; serving as a template for use in the Black African global diaspora. Generally, the UK’s Black-African population is relatively understudied compared to other groups among Britain’s visible ethnic communities (Daley, 1998). Likewise, in much of the established ethnic entrepreneurship knowledge in the UK and elsewhere in the diaspora, the Black African group is relatively understudied in comparison with other visible ethnic minority groups. For example, the frame of reference for the Black African entrepreneurship in the UK is weak. This is because a good deal of research studies focus on the generic Afro-Caribbean entrepreneurship that tends to generalize Black ethnic entrepreneurship as a single categorical group (Nwankwo, 2005). It is partly for this reason that Black African ethnic groups’ entrepreneurship is consistently subsumed within fuzzy appellations such as Black entrepreneurship, Afro-Caribbean entrepreneurship, African-Caribbean entrepreneurship, Black Minority Ethnic entrepreneurship (BME), etc. This muddle seems to link to a failure on the part of scholastic research to appreciate the temporal and spatial dimensions of self-employment relations in the Black African community or deal with the differences in the operating contexts. This is even more pronounced in complementary discourses in the US, and European-based research studies such that important gaps remain as scholars pursue this rapidly evolving field (i.e. Black African entrepreneurship).

Basically, the increasing mobility and growth in population across time and space inform the emergence of a large vibrant Black African diaspora in the UK. For instance, the Black African population has doubled from 0.8% in 2001 to 1.7% nominally in 2011 (ONS, 2011). Correspondingly, there is an escalation of Black African entrepreneurship in the UK, which reflects the widespread growth of ethnic minority businesses in recent years (e.g. Nwankwo, 2005). This is to be expected as migrancy is historically correlated with inordinately high levels of entrepreneurial activities in the host countries (e.g. Bonacich & Modell, 1980; Light, 2004). However, it appears research has not kept pace with the widespread growth of Black Africans’ population and their entrepreneurship in the UK.

More fundamentally, many research interests are hindered by the scarcity of in-depth studies on Black Africans entrepreneurship in the UK. Some
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