

An Assessment of the Perception of the Effectiveness of Entrepreneurship Education among University Undergraduates

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Abstract

The paper investigates the perception of students in Gombe State University about the effectiveness of entrepreneurship education offered by the university. Adopting a quantitative research approach and survey design, the study focused on 300L and 400L students of the Department of Business Administration of the University. These students have all undergone one or more entrepreneurship education training as offered by the university. The study employed the entire population 129 (n=129) in total (67 300L and 62 400L students). Data were collected through the use of well structured questionnaire. Validity and reliability tests were carried out, as a measure of reliability, cronbach's alpha was used and a coefficient of 0.78 was recorded. Findings reveal that the effectiveness of entrepreneurial education offered by the university is only effective with respect to certain outcomes but ineffective in other respects. Entrepreneurship education in an ideal sense should provide the recipient(s) the needed skills and attitude to be entrepreneurial. This study ascertained among others that entrepreneurial education has not encouraged the students to pursue entrepreneurial ventures. Entrepreneurship education also has not been so effective in the area of preparing the recipients to access funding from banks or other financial institutions. Among other recommendations, the study employs the university's management to embrace the culture of training and retraining of its entrepreneurship education staffers to be effective in motivating and encouraging the recipients of the education to pursue entrepreneurial ventures and how to access support from banks and other financial institutions.

Keywords: *Perception, Effectiveness and Entrepreneurship education*

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Background to the Study

The increasing relevance and/or importance of entrepreneurship education and the ability of entrepreneurial education to contribute to the growth of economy and provision of job opportunities have inspired many universities to offer entrepreneurship education courses particularly in academic programs. Entrepreneurial education is used to deliver entrepreneurial knowledge, skills and abilities to the students, helping them to succeed in their entrepreneurial careers. In other words, entrepreneurship education train students to gain innovative enterprise skills and capture the opportunities to succeed in business ventures (Nian, Bakar & Aminul-Islam, 2014).

Many scholars (Pulka, Aminu & Rikwentishe, 2015; Douglas & Shepherd, 2002; Fatoki & Oni, 2014) are in consensus with regards to the fact that entrepreneurship education plays an important role in developing an entrepreneur. In Nigeria, the increased importance of entrepreneurship education and its ability to contribute to the creation of job opportunities and even growth of the economy has undoubtedly inspired not only universities but higher institutions of learning in general to include modules relating to entrepreneurship into their respective curriculums and Gombe state university was no exception. Although the university (GSU) is still at its infancy, it has over the years taught entrepreneurship courses both in theory and practice in order to prepare graduates to be successful in their career when they set up a new business venture or in small medium enterprise (SME). This supports the claim of Drucker (1985) who maintain that entrepreneurship can be taught and learnt. It is also supported by Arasti, Falavarjani and Imanipour (2012) who maintained that other important factors such as the learning style of students and even the teaching method employed for the tutoring of entrepreneurship modules are important considerations which should be taken into cognizance in teaching the subject.

Robinson, Stimpson, Huefner and Hunt (1991) confirmed that education in general terms have a positive impact on entrepreneurship. In their study, Robinson et. al, (1991) found that there is a strong relationship between education and the probability of becoming an entrepreneur. However, Robinson et. al (1991) did not differentiate between the various kinds of education and disregarded the possibility of specifically designed entrepreneurship education programmes. This study focuses on designed entrepreneurship education program as offered by the University in question. In other words, the study assesses the perception of students in Gombe state university to determine the effectiveness of entrepreneurial education in the university.

Statement of the Problem

The dwindling ratio of the so-called white-collar jobs when compared to the rate of turnout of graduates at all levels of education remains alarming. This necessitates a need to turn out graduates who will not only be self reliant but employers of labour. In order to achieve this, the Federal Government of Nigeria, through the National Universities Commission (NUC) introduced Entrepreneurship Education which is aimed at equipping students with entrepreneurial skills, attitudes and competencies in order to be job providers and not job seekers. However, since the introduction of these courses into the curriculum of universities in Nigeria, there seems to be increase of graduate unemployment. For instance,

unemployment rate in Nigeria was recorded at 12.1% in first quarter of 2016, up from 10.4% in the fourth quarter of 2015, making it highest since December of 2009. The number of unemployed persons rose by 18% to 9.485 million, employment grew a meager 0.12% to 69 million and labour force went up 2% to 78.4 million. Meanwhile, youth unemployment increased to 21.5% from 19%. Unemployment Rate in Nigeria averaged 9.04 percent from 2006 until 2016 (NBS, 2016). With this trend of events, a question is being asked whether these entrepreneurial education courses been effective especially in preparing the recipients to become entrepreneurs. This study intends to fill this gap by asking for the opinions of the recipients of this sort of education. In other words, the study intends to carry out an assessment of the perception of the effectiveness of entrepreneurship education among university undergraduates in Gombe State University.

Objective of the Study

The objective of the study is to investigate the perception of university students on the effectiveness of entrepreneurship education in the university.

Review of Related Literature

The term entrepreneurship has very long history. In fact, the history dates as far back to 1732 when according to Minniti and Lévesque, (2008: 603) an Irish economist Richard Cantillon made use of the word in reference to individual(s) with a willingness and desire to carry out any form of arbitrage which involves some form of financial risk in starting a venture. Minniti and Lévesque (2008) argue that *entreprendre* can be translated to mean "to start or undertake something".

Researchers like Drucker (1985) remain one of the most influential pro-opponents in the area of shaping our thoughts and understanding of entrepreneurial behavior. Drucker (1985) described an entrepreneur in general terms to mean someone who organizes, manages, and assumes all the risks of an enterprise.

Hisrich, Michael and Shephard (2005) defined entrepreneurship as a dynamic process of creating incremental wealth by entrepreneurs who take responsibility for the major risks in terms of time, equity and career commitment. Hisrich, Michael, and Shephard, (2005) argue that entrepreneurship include such behaviors as initiative taking, organizing and reorganizing social and economic mechanisms to turn resources and situation to practical account, the acceptance of risk or failure. On the other hand, Gartner (1985) described the creation of a new venture via four different dimensions. These dimensions include the individual(s), the process, environment and organization.

The individual as a dimension state the personalities of the entrepreneurs such as need of achievement, and risk taking propensity in new venture creation. The process as a dimension talks about common behaviors of the entrepreneur including locating business opportunities and accumulating resources. The environment refers to as externalities of conditions that organization needs to be adapted. Lastly, the organization element relates the characteristics of the organization to the competitive strategies like entry wedges and joint ventures.

Understanding Entrepreneurship Education

According to Ediagbonya (2013), entrepreneurship education refers to a teaching process that provides training and information and also educates recipients with interest in entrepreneurial activities. According to Nian, Bakar and Aminul-Islam (2014), entrepreneurship education differs from business education pointing that one of main objectives of entrepreneurship education that makes it different from business education is that it generates even quicker a greater variety of ideas on how to exploit or take advantage of business opportunities as well as the ability to be able to project extensive sequence of actions for venturing into business.

According to Henry, Hill and Leitch (2005), entrepreneurship education refers to that education which assists students to develop positive attitudes, innovation and skills for self reliance, rather than depending on the government for employment. Often, the need for this kind of education is to produce graduates with capabilities and self confidence for independent thought to discover new information leading to self empowerment and economic development. This contribution supports that of Agu (2006) who argued that entrepreneurship education refers to the type of education designed to change both the orientation and attitude of the recipients which equips the recipient with both knowledge and skills to enable the him/her to start and be able to manage a business entity. In other words, entrepreneurship education aims at developing the necessary entrepreneurial attitude, competence and skills that will equip an individual to be able commence and manage a business enterprise. Agu (2006) added that entrepreneurship education deals with those skills and attitudes that are needed for an individual to respond to his or her environment in the process of starting and managing a business enterprise; arguing further that this is often based on the fact that some basic skills and attitudes are very essential for an entrepreneur or prospective entrepreneur to respond positively to her or his environment.

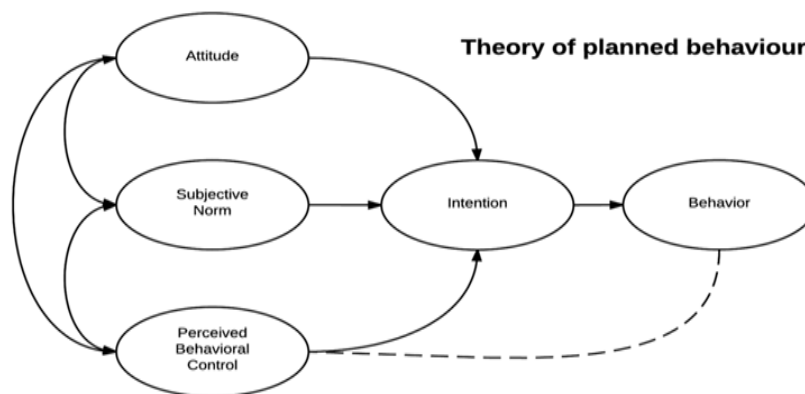
This supports the position of Sexton and Upton (1984) who argues that entrepreneurial education prepares an individual to be equipped to acquire saleable skills which could be used to manage his/her own business or that/those of other person (s). Concurring also is Souitaris, Zerbinati and Andreas (2007) who argued that entrepreneurship education is not a prerogative of some set of people but maintain that it is an education that is open to all; arguing that it is the reason why the clamor for its introduction into the curriculum of universities to prepare students for entrepreneurial ventures upon graduation. Souitaris, Zerbinati and Andreas (2007) conclude that entrepreneurial education focuses on developing understanding and capacity for pursuit of entrepreneurship behaviors, attitudes and skills in different contexts.

According to Fatoki and Oni (2014), entrepreneurship education deals with the introduction of changes and new ideas as well as the ability to control resources such that they satisfy an entrepreneurs' objective. In doing this, Fatoki and Oni (2014) argue that there is a need to develop some skills and attitudes based on confidence and good judgment which involves taking decisions and making choices, ability to assume reasonable risks among others.

Theoretical framework

The theory of planned behaviour

This study aligns with the theory of planned behavior. According to Pulka, Aminu and Rikwentishe (2015:151), Ajzen is the proponent of the planned behavior theory. This theory proposes that behavioural intentions are formed by individual's attitude towards that behaviour, subjective norms and perception of behavioural control. The theory states that attitude towards behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control, together shape an individual's behavioral intentions and behaviors.



Source: Orzanna (2015)

Pulka, Aminu and Rikwentishe (2015:151) postulate that most behaviours result from an individual's intention to perform entrepreneurial behaviour and their ability to make mindful choices among alternatives and make good decisions. This Theory is made up of three components: the attitude toward the behaviour, subjective norm and perceived behavioural control as shown in diagram above. This study adopts the theory of planned behavior because the study explains human behavior. The framework was also adopted because it is most appropriate theoretical basis of entrepreneurship education given that it influences the formation of process of entrepreneurship intention. Finally, the theory was adopted because entrepreneurship is in fact a planned behavior given that new entrepreneurial ventures cannot be created without planning.

Methodology

The study adopted a quantitative research approach with a survey design. The study focused on 300L and 400L undergraduate students in the Department of Business Administration, Gombe State University. Both 300L and 400L students of the University have undergone one entrepreneurship course or the other. The population of the study is 129 (n=129) comprising of 67 300L and 62 400L students. The entire population was adopted for the study.

Data were collected through the use of self-administered questionnaire to the students. Questionnaire was divided into two sections. Section (1) solicited information on respondents' demographic variables. Section two (2) sought for students' opinions on the effectiveness of entrepreneurial education offered by the University. The questionnaire was

adapted from previous studies on the effectiveness of entrepreneurship education. These studies include those carried out by Nian, Bakar and Aminul-Islam (2014), Al moosa and Porkodi (2014). Questionnaire included a 4-point likert scale with rating scales comprising of Strongly Agreed (SA), Agreed (A), Disagreed (D) and Strongly Disagreed (SD)

Validity of the instrument (Questionnaire)

The questionnaire used was subjected to face and content validity. A couple of senior staffers of the Department of Business Administration of GSU where handed draft copies of questionnaire used for the study and their inputs were all incorporated into the final questionnaire administered to respondents.

Test for reliability

As shown on table 1 below, Cronbach's alpha was used to measure reliability. 0.78 was recorded as the coefficient alpha for the measures of effectiveness of entrepreneurship education. 0.78 indicates a very high reliability.

Table 1: Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	No. of Items
.780	13

Results and Discussions

The study employed a survey research design. Adopting the entire population (129 respondents), a total of 129 well structured questionnaires were distributed to both 300L and 400L students. All the 129 questionnaires were retrieved, 7 of which were found unusable by the researchers due to one form of error or the other and failure to complete vital parts of the questionnaire. This means a total of 122 questionnaires, representing 94.57% of the administered questionnaire were as the rate of analyzed for the purpose of this study.

In terms of gender participation, 57 respondents, representing 46.72% of the total number of survey participants were females while 65 respondents representing a participation rate of 53.28% were male participants. In relation to the ages of survey participants, respondents with ages 20 & under had a participation rate of 5.74%. 56.56% were between the ages of 21-30 while 37.70% were between ages 31-40 years. Regarding current level of study, all respondents are undergraduate students of the Department of Business Administration, 49.18% of which were 300L students and 50.82% were 400L students.

Table 2: Outcome of Survey

Outcome of Entrepreneurship Education	Mean	SD
Entrepreneurship education I received makes me see entrepreneurship as a viable career option	5.61	0.83
The University through entrepreneurship education has encouraged me to pursue entrepreneurship venture.	4.11	0.92
I consider entrepreneurship class as an ideal place to learn about how to start a business	6.03	0.83
Practical examples of entrepreneurship were included in classroom teaching.	4.35	0.89
Through entrepreneurship lectures, I now understand the importance of entrepreneurship.	6.18	0.94
GSU's entrepreneurship courses prepare students very well for entrepreneurial careers.	5.38	0.87
A creative environment in the university stimulates me to develop ideas for new ventures.	3.91	1.03
The university provides resources/support to assist student entrepreneurs.	3.74	0.88
As a result of entrepreneurial education I received from the university, I have been able to develop entrepreneurial skills, knowledge and competencies to become an entrepreneur.	5.37	1.02
As a result of taking entrepreneurship courses, I have better understanding about business.	5.38	1.08
Through entrepreneurship lectures I have received, I've learnt how to prepare a business plan and conduct feasibility study.	5.99	0.84
Through entrepreneurship lectures I received from the university, I have learnt to approach banks and financial institutions for financial support.	4.04	0.92

Source: Survey, (2016)

Table above shows the results on the analyzed data on the perception of students in GSU about the effectiveness of entrepreneurship education. Findings reveal that most of the survey participants agree that entrepreneurship is in fact a viable career option (mean=5.61). However, the findings also indicate that the university through its entrepreneurial education has not encouraged the students to pursue entrepreneurial ventures (mean =4.11). This may be attributed to the method(s) employed by resource persons in teaching these courses.

Results (mean=6.03) also depict that most of the survey participants agree that the entrepreneurial class remains the ideal place to learn about entrepreneurship. However, opinions point out that the use of practical examples by staffers during classroom teaching is weak (mean=4.35). Mwasalwiba (2010) argue innovative approach to the teaching of entrepreneurship is more effective in influencing the entrepreneurial behavior of the recipient.

In a similar fashion, majority of the respondents (mean= 6.18) agree that through entrepreneurship lectures they have been able to understand the importance of entrepreneurship. Also, majority of respondents (mean=5.38) agree that entrepreneurship courses offered by the university prepares them for a career in entrepreneurship. In terms of

creative environment that stimulate the generation of new entrepreneurial ideas and resources to support student entrepreneurs, respective mean scores of 3.91 and 3.74 were recorded. This is relatively weak.

Most of the survey participants (mean=5.37) agree that through the entrepreneurship courses they had undergone, they've been able to develop entrepreneurship knowledge and competences to become entrepreneurs. The recipients also do have better understanding of business (mean=5.38) as a result of taking entrepreneurship courses as offered by the university and that through these courses, they have learnt to prepare business plans and conduct feasibility study (mean=5.99). However, results suggest that in the area of approaching banks and other financial institutions to access support, respondents are weak in that aspect (mean=4.04).

The results suggest that entrepreneurship education is effective with respect to certain outcomes but also ineffective in some areas. Entrepreneurship education seems to encourage students to take on entrepreneurship as a career and gives students the skills needed such as how to prepare a business plan. However, entrepreneurship education does not seem effective in helping students to meet people with good business ideas or in preparing students.

Conclusion

It's common knowledge that the dwindling ratio of blue-chip or white-collar jobs as it is known commonly, in comparison to the rate at which graduates are being turned out at all levels of education remain on decline. It is no wonder that the Federal Government of Nigeria through the NUC introduced entrepreneurial education with the aim of equipping recipients with adequate entrepreneurship skills, attitude and competence to become employment providers as opposed to job seekers.

This paper did investigate the perception of students on the effectiveness on entrepreneurship education in Gombe State University. The study provides is an important exploratory analysis for entrepreneurship education. Entrepreneurship education should not only provide theoretical knowledge but should provide that knowledge that is able to assist the recipient on establishing an entrepreneurship mindset through developing entrepreneurial interest, skills, behaviors and attitudes. Also, entrepreneurship education should train and equip the recipients with adequate entrepreneurial abilities to support in starting and engaging in entrepreneurship activities. This study did find relative weakness in certain areas relating to the effectiveness of entrepreneurship in Gombe State University and proffer a number of recommendations.

Recommendations

Following the findings of this research, this study recommends that

- i. The university (GSU) should employ a culture of training and re-train its entrepreneurship education staffers to be effective in areas respondents/students opined to be weak in relation to the entrepreneurship training provided by the university; like in the area of motivation and encouraging students to pursue entrepreneurship ventures.
- ii. The recipients of entrepreneurship education in the university should be trained or educated in the area of approaching banks and other financial institutions to access financial supports.
- iii. The university (GSU) should collaborate with established business owner/entrepreneurs in entrepreneurship education. In other words, established entrepreneurs should be occasionally invited to deliver lectures to students of the university on entrepreneurship. And such entrepreneurs should be encouraged by the management of the university to act as mentors to student and provide internship opportunities where students would be encouraged to earn practical experience on the business.

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