

**RELEVANCE OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION IN DEVELOPING
ENTREPRENEURIAL COMPETENCIES AMONG UNIVERSITY UNDERGRADUATES IN
ZARIA**

BY

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Abstract

The study examines the perception of undergraduate students on the relevance of entrepreneurship education in developing entrepreneurial competencies in Zaria. The design of the study was descriptive survey. The population of the study consists of 400 level undergraduate students of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria numbering 245. The sample size was 150 determined using research advisors table for sample selection. Simple random sampling technique was used in sample selection. The four point modified Likert scale questionnaire title "Entrepreneurship Education and Entrepreneurial Competencies and Traits Questionnaire" (EEECTQ) is used as instrument for collecting data in the study. The instrument was duly validated by experts. The reliability coefficient index stood at 0.65. The study used arithmetic mean and standard deviation to answer the questions raised. The study discovered that entrepreneurship education develop in the students entrepreneurial competencies such as financial literacy, management skills, ability to take responsibility and make decisions, competitiveness, perseverance, ability to network and make contacts and ability to research effectively. In the light of the findings made, the study's recommendations include the need for teaching entrepreneurship education to centre on developing willingness to take risks among undergraduate students

Keywords: *Competencies, Education, Entrepreneurship, Relevance Undergraduates*

Introduction

Entrepreneurship education has continued to features as a captivating theme in local and international conferences because of its potency as a tool for mitigating unemployment and other socio-economic challenges inhibiting sustainable development in all parts of the world. Inclusion of entrepreneurship education into curricula of tertiary institutions started in the United States of America as far back as 1947 (Kuratko, 2003). Entrepreneurship refers to an individual's ability to turn ideas into action. It includes creativity, innovation and risk taking, as well as the ability to plan and manage projects in order to achieve the desired objective. Gwija, Eresia-Eke & Iwu (2014) consider entrepreneurship education as a comprehensive term referring to those aspects of education at process involving, in addition to general education, the study of technology related sciences and the acquisition of entrepreneurial skills, attitudes, understanding and knowledge relating occupations in various sectors of economic and social life.

The essence of entrepreneurship education is to equip learners with entrepreneurial skills to enable them create, run and succeed in business start-up. According to Van-der Kuip and Verheul (2003) views entrepreneurial core skills as "those capacities that constitute the basic necessary and sufficient conditions for the pursuit of effective entrepreneurial behaviour individually, organizationally and societal in an increasingly turbulent and global environment. Van-der Kuip and Verheul (2003) added that the entrepreneurial skills that should be taught include: intuitive decision making creative problem solving, managing interdependency on a know-how basis, ability to conclude deals, strategic thinking, project management, time management, persuasion, selling, negotiation and motivating people by setting an example.

Nigerian youths particularly graduates are currently facing serious unemployment problems more than ever before. This is due to several factors one of which is since students often have no clear idea of what they want to do after graduation. It is on this premise that Agi and Arikawei (2011) reported that over 200,000 graduates are produced each year, only 25% are absorbed in the labour market. The remaining 75% are left in the labour market perpetually looking for jobs, with the resultant increased armed-robbery, kidnapping, insurgency and other social vices in the polity. The inability of the social studies graduates and other products of our educational system to contribute meaningfully to the economic development by being self-employed was what informed the introduction of Entrepreneurship Education across the three tiers of tertiary institutions of the country. This programme was perceived as a sure way of remedying the current unemployment challenge due to the government's inability to absorb all the graduates from the nation's tertiary institutions (Ediagbonya, 2013).

Nigeria adopted entrepreneurship education to accelerate economic growth and development. Entrepreneurship education is education about business and education for business (Salihu, 2014). According to Ubah (2011) entrepreneurship education is a form of education which makes human to be responsive to their personal, families and national needs and aspiration. Buttressing the above points of view, Muhammad (2012) sees entrepreneurship education as the purposeful intervention by an educator in the life of the learner to impart entrepreneurial qualities and skills to enable the learner to survive in the world of business. Entrepreneurship education and training can make a positive contribution to job creation and therefore, to poverty alleviation - encouraging entrepreneurial spirit is a key to creating jobs and improving competitiveness and economic growth throughout market economies. Curriculum development, together with entrepreneurship education, will improve the quality of teaching entrepreneurship at all levels.

The Nigeria's National Policy on Education (2013) states that education is the most important instrument for propelling change, as no fundamental change can occur in any society except through educational revolution that impact on the intellect. To that effect, the Federal Ministry of Education directed that entrepreneurship education be included as part of the curricula of the University, Polytechnics and Colleges of Education through the National Universities Commission (NUC), National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) and National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) effective from 2007/2008 academic session (International Labour Organization, 2010; Gabadeen and Raimi, 2012).

The structural functionalist also known as equilibrium theory is Radcliff Brown, Malinowski, Durkheim, Herbert Spencer and Parsons served as plank on which the study rests. The Functionalist theory is a sociological paradigm that originally attempted to explain social institution as a collective means of fulfilling individual biological needs. Later, the theory came to focus on the ways in which social institutions in the society fulfill social needs, particularly social stability (Isa, 2016).

In this context, the functionalist theory provides understanding of the functional importance of education as a means of solving social problem (unemployment) in order to regulate and create new social order (Job creation). Considering Herbert Spencer's concept of function as originated from the functionalist school of thought (Perrin, 1976). Society function the way it does based on interdependent relationships that exist among the various social institutions that make up that society. Thus, the society is likened to human body whereby each part functions for the continuous regulation of the whole body. Spencer tends to draw comparison between the society and the human body arguing that any attempt to understand any part of the body organ must be done relating to the other part of the body because they all function to contribute towards the maintenance of the whole system. In the same vein, the various social institutions exist and persist based on the essential functions they

perform in the society. In other words, to understand a component of society, one must ask, what is the function the various institutions such as educational in society perform? A complete answer could be quite complex and require a detailed analysis of the history of education, but one obvious answer is that education prepares individuals to enter the work force and therefore maintains a functioning economy.

In addition, functionalist theory was adopted by this study due to the rise in unemployment among graduates resulted to increased social vices which constitute a serious challenge to our educational, socio-economic stability of our society. However, in order to have a harmonious co-existence of all sectors of society, the present global dynamics of the environment requires innovative education that will revolve around needs of the youths, communities and employers of labour (entrepreneurship education). Hence, functional skills imparted to learners will enable them to use their skills and initiatives to create wealth for self-reliance so that product of our school system could contribute their own quota for the attainment of a well-balanced, stable and development of our society. It is against background that this study examines the perception of undergraduates on the relevance of entrepreneurship education in developing entrepreneurial competencies.

Objective of the Study

The main objective of the study is to determine the perception of undergraduate students on the relevance of entrepreneurship education in developing entrepreneurial competencies in Zaria.

Research Question

The study answered the following question:

- i. What is the perception of students on the relevance of entrepreneurship education in developing entrepreneurship competencies?

Methodology

The descriptive survey research design is adopted for this study. The population of the study consists of 400 level undergraduate students of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria numbering 245. The sample size was 150 determined using research advisors table for sample selection. Simple random sampling technique was used in sample selection. The four point modified Likert scale questionnaire title "Entrepreneurship Education and Entrepreneurial Competencies and Traits Questionnaire" (EEECTQ) is used as instrument for collecting data in the study. The instrument was duly validated by experts. The reliability coefficient index stood at 0.65. The four point modified likert scale is represented thus: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD). The study used arithmetic mean and standard deviation to answer the questions raised.

Results

Research Question One: What is the perception of students on the relevance of entrepreneurship education in developing entrepreneurship competencies?

Table 1: Perception of undergraduates on entrepreneurial competencies emphasized in entrepreneurship education

| S/No | Entrepreneurial Competencies | Response Categories | | | | Mean | Std.Dev | Remark |
|------|---------------------------------------------------|---------------------|----|----|----|------|---------|-----------|
| | | SA | A | D | SD | | | |
| 1 | Financial literacy | 46 | 34 | 30 | 40 | 2.57 | 1.04 | Agreed |
| 2 | Willingness to take risks | 41 | 35 | 30 | 44 | 2.49 | 1.05 | Disagreed |
| 3 | Management skills | 40 | 44 | 35 | 31 | 2.62 | 0.77 | Agreed |
| 4 | Communication skills | 33 | 50 | 20 | 47 | 2.46 | 0.80 | Disagreed |
| 5 | Able to plan, coordinate and organise effectively | 35 | 41 | 30 | 44 | 2.45 | 1.01 | Disagreed |

| | | | | | | | | |
|---------------------|------------------------------------------------|----|----|----|----|------|------|--------|
| 6 | Able to take responsibility and make decisions | 50 | 25 | 31 | 44 | 2.54 | 0.57 | Agreed |
| 7 | Competitiveness | 50 | 41 | 40 | 19 | 2.81 | 1.05 | Agreed |
| 8 | Perseverance | 41 | 41 | 30 | 38 | 2.57 | 0.80 | Agreed |
| 9 | Ability to network and make contacts | 38 | 38 | 40 | 34 | 2.53 | 0.81 | Agreed |
| 10 | Able to research effectively | 55 | 30 | 20 | 45 | 2.63 | 1.11 | Agreed |
| | Cumulative mean | | | | | 2.57 | | |
| Decision mean =2.50 | | | | | | | | |

Table 1 shows the perception of undergraduate students on the relevance of entrepreneurship education in developing entrepreneurial competencies. The decision mean used is 2.50 and the cumulative mean stands at 2.57. Based on this it can be seen that items 1, 3, 6,7,8,9 and 10 are favoured by the respondents while items 2, 4 and 5 are rejected by the respondents.

Discussion of Findings

The study discovered that entrepreneurship education develop in the students entrepreneurial competencies such as financial literacy, management skills, ability to take responsibility and make decisions, competitiveness, perseverance, ability to network and make contacts and ability to research effectively. In addition, it is discovered that entrepreneurship education does not fare well in developing willingness to take risks among undergraduates, communication skills and ability to plan, coordinate and organise effectively. In the light of this, Dikko (2015) in a study on the influence of entrepreneurship education in developing entrepreneurial qualities and skills among students (HND) of Kaduna Polytechnic discovered that the respondents acquired intuitive decision making, high achievement orientation, and high level of autonomy among other qualities and skills as a result of learning entrepreneurship education which attracted their highest mean response. Moreover, Muhammed and Salihu (2015) in a study on the efficacy of social studies in developing entrepreneurial qualities among NCE students in Niger state discovered that male and female students agreed that Social Studies education promotes in the students a high achievement orientation; both male and female students agreed that Social Studies education inculcates in the students' the perseverance and persistence to stick to a task until it is completed. However, regardless of their gender and study level the students agreed that Social Studies education emphasizes on creative problem solving on the basis of their gender, both male and female students disagreed that Social Studies education encourage students to set challenging goals and strive after these goals through own effort. The respondents agreed that Social Studies education develop in the students a high propensity to take moderate risks and flexibility. Muhammed and Salihu's study indicates that other subject disciplines like Social Studies education promotes some entrepreneurial qualities as entrepreneurship education.

Conclusion

Based on the above findings the study concludes that entrepreneurship education develop in the students (undergraduates) entrepreneurial competencies such as financial literacy, management skills, ability to take responsibility and make decisions, competitiveness, perseverance, ability to network and make contacts and ability to research effectively. In addition, it is also concluded that entrepreneurship education does not fare well in developing willingness to take risks among undergraduates, communication skills and ability to plan, coordinate and organise effectively

Recommendations

The study recommends as follows:

1. The teaching of entrepreneurship education should centre on developing willingness to take risks among undergraduate students. This will assist in filling the vacuum left in the teaching and learning process as this skill is vital in entrepreneurship development;

2. Communication skills should be emphasized in entrepreneurship education course and should demonstrate its practical application in the business encounter;
3. Entrepreneurship education should develop in the students' the ability to plan, coordinate and organise effectively as these competencies are sin qua non for entrepreneurship success.

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