

Entrepreneurship Education and Attitude of Undergraduate Students to Self Employment in Mubi, Adamawa State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This paper explores entrepreneurship education (EE) and attitude of undergraduate students to self employment intentions. The study adopted a survey design and was based on three theories; namely, cause and effect, pragmatism and social learning theory of career choice. The population of the study was 5000 undergraduate students; a sample size of 370 was determined using Taro Yamane's formula for finite population and was drawn using stratified sampling technique. Seven research questions were raised for the study. Data was collected using a structured questionnaire titled Entrepreneurship Education and Self Employment Intentions Questionnaire (EESIQ). The data collected were analyzed using frequency counts and percentages. Findings highlight that exposure to EE is beneficial, it influenced self employment intentions of tertiary students; it enriched their knowledge on starting and owning business, and changed their perception about self-employment. It was recommended that EE should be included into the curricula of all educational institutions in Nigeria.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship education, Undergraduate, Self-employment

1. Introduction

The historical trend of higher education in Nigeria from the 1930s to the late first decade of the third millennium reveals that the number of established tertiary institutions in the country has experienced a tremendous growth. For example, polytechnics grew from one in the 1930s to sixty in 2007. There was only one university in 1948. Today there are ninety-five universities and more are being proposed. Between 1958 and 2008, colleges of education have grown from one to eighty four (Ajao, 2008).

The proliferation of Universities, Polytechnics, Colleges of Education and other specialized tertiary institutions in Nigeria and other nations of the world is a desirable thing for learning. However, the contents of the various tertiary institutions as documented in their various curricula do not reflect entrepreneurial skills development that will enable young graduates to be self employed. Thus, one of the major factors as well as challenges that face the education sector for the attainment of the Federal Government's developmental programmes such as "7-point agenda", "Vision 20-20-20" is the issue of the curriculum.

According to Aladekomo (2004) existing curricula in most of our tertiary institutions were fashioned after those of higher institutions in Europe and Americas, particularly Britain and the USA, the colonial educational policy, which still affects decisions in the educational sector, was meant to only produce literates to man certain positions that reinforces their control over their subjects. The curricula were narrow and stereotypically lopsided taking into consideration only the needs of the colonial masters without taking into consideration that the students have the whole world as their catchment area and should be able to function in the global market and not at a corner of the globe only. As a consequence, many of the curricula in Nigeria educational system, particularly at the tertiary level, are not geared toward effective national and economic development, because the graduates of such programmes are not easily employed or self employed and in most cases have to wait for many years after graduation to secure jobs (if any). Hence, the rate of unemployment among university and polytechnic graduates in Nigeria is as high as 71.4 percent (Yoloye, 2008). To respond to the unemployment menace, the Government of Nigeria had in time past set up agencies to deal with specific areas and labour groupings in the country. For instance, the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) has a programme on youth employment. Also, the National Directorate of Employment (NDE) serves as the main employment generation body. However, the evaluation of their programmes in the areas of youth employment confirms that a nationwide action plan is still needed (Giwa, 2008). In this regard, Chancellors, Rectors and Provosts of Nigerian higher educational institutions recently identified the importance of introducing Entrepreneurship Education (EE) into their educational curricula. So, the Federal Government directed

all tertiary education regulatory agencies to establish necessary mechanisms for the introduction, development and sustenance of entrepreneurial culture among Nigerian youths in an attempt to reverse graduate unemployment trend by giving the needed training in entrepreneurial skills to students for setting up businesses and to consider self employment as a viable career option. This is believed to be paramount to curtailing the present unemployment menace being encountered by Nigerian graduates in searching for jobs that are not readily available.

Entrepreneurship education (EE) according to Isaac, Visser, Friedrich and Brijlal (2007) is the purposeful intervention by an educator in the life of the learner to survive in the world of business; and it has as its focus an action orientation primarily embodied in teaching students how to develop a business plan. EE develops and stimulates entrepreneurial process, providing all tools necessary for starting up new ventures (Postigo and Tomborini, 2002). It is commonly believed that EE is an imperative that would make a positive contribution to improving the entrepreneurship orientation of people, leading to the acquisition of skills, creativity, confidence, drive and courage, in order to create employment for self and others. EE has come to denote all forms of The knowledge delivery that seek to empower the individual to create real wealth in the economic sector, thereby advancing the cause of development of the nation as a whole. According to Bassegy and Archibong (2005), the goal of EE is intended to empower graduates irrespective of their areas of specialization with skills that will enable them to engage in income yielding venture, if they are unable to secure jobs in the public sector. It is a reorientation from job seekers to job creators.

The rationale for the inclusion of entrepreneurship curricula in tertiary institutions according to Cotton, O’Gorman and Stampfi (2000) is that it will help graduates to acquire increased understanding of entrepreneurship, equip them with entrepreneurial approach to the world of work and prepare them to act as entrepreneurs and managers of new businesses. Thus, the objectives of EE as succinctly presented by the European Union (2002) include: “raising students’ awareness of self employment as a career option (the message being that you can become not only an employee, but also an employer); promoting the development of personal qualities that are relevant to entrepreneurship, such as creativity, risk taking and responsibility; and providing the technical and business skills that are needed in order to start a new venture”. From the foregoing it can be deduced that exposure of undergraduate students to EE will ginger- up entrepreneurial drive in students and if properly packaged, can be a significant factor in chronic unemployment reduction among graduates. It is a considered opinion that national entrepreneurship (free enterprise) development would be very important to achieving a nationwide economic development.

It has been realized previously that the type of education offered in most tertiary institutions produce graduates for whom there is no market demands. Graduates are produced for wage employment in the formal sector. Unemployment of graduates from Nigerian tertiary institution has become a major national problem. The period between graduation and employment dates has continued to lengthen and this has become a source of frustration for graduates. In the circumstance, it is obvious that the only viable option is self employment. Currently most tertiary institutions have initiated entrepreneurship education programmes in the hope that it will equip the graduates with skills necessary to start their own businesses, to be job creators, instead of job seekers. This is sequel to the directives by Federal Government of Nigeria to all tertiary institutions, to offer EE courses so as to enhance the skills acquisition of tertiary education graduates for self employment. In Nigeria, EE is still at its infancy (Oyebade, 2003). While most Nigerian tertiary institutions have initiated the programme, little research is available to assess its impact and to confirm if a relationship exists between students taking courses in entrepreneurship and their intention of becoming entrepreneurs. In this context, it is of primary importance to understand whether EE raises career intentions to be entrepreneur generally or whether it helps students determine how well suited they are for entrepreneurship. This study therefore appraises EE programme and attempts to find out its impact on self employment intentions of tertiary students especially the attitude of final year undergraduates in Mubi towards self -employment.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Framework

This study was based on three theories, namely; Cause and Effect, Pragmatism and Social Learning Theory of Career Choice. Cause and effect describes how something happens, analyzes why something happens; examines cause, describes effect or do both because it links situations and events together in time, with cause preceding effect (Laurie & Stephen, 1995). Furthermore, causality refers to cause-and-effect analysis, it explains why something happened, or is happening and it predicts what probably will happen. Sometimes, many different causes may be responsible for

one effect, and similarly, many different effects could be produced by a single cause. In logic, causes are often distinguished in to two types: necessary and sufficient. If x is a necessary cause of y, then the presence of y necessarily implies the presence of x. The presence of x, however, does not imply that y will occur. If x is a sufficient cause of y, then the presence of x necessarily implies the presence of y. However, another cause z may alternatively cause y, thus the presence of y does not imply the presence of x (Epp, 2004). Cause and effect is established through intervention trial in which two or more groups undergo the same experience except for a single facet. The single facet in this study is Entrepreneurship Education (EE). Any difference in outcome is then attributed to that single facet (Freedman, 1999). Causality (causation) denotes a logical relationship between one event (called cause) and another event (called effect) which is the direct consequence of the first (Wikipedia, 2007). The cause in this study is EE while self-employment is the effect.

The philosophical thought germane to EE generally is pragmatism. It was propounded by John Dewey (1859-1952). Dewey stated that education is the means of "social continuity of life" given the facts of birth and death of each one of the constituent members in a social group. Education is therefore a necessity, for "the life of the group goes on" (Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy, 2011) Dewey was a proponent of Educational Progressivism and a relentless campaigner for reform of education, pointing out that the authoritarian, strict, pre-ordained knowledge approach of modern traditional education was too concerned with delivering knowledge, and not enough with understanding students' actual experiences (Neil, 2005). In the pragmatic view, education is a tool for solving individual problems, and as individuals improve in skills acquisition, education and income status, his society is also improved; the central aim of education should be to teach people to think rationally, independently and learn to live intelligently. As a theory, pragmatism has had a far-reaching impact because "knowledge is valuable only if it provides data in the problem solving process without sacrificing self discipline and individual differences; the universe is dynamic and evolving; truth is relative and based on experience. Education should be student centred, directed towards solving problems to create new social order" (Neil, 2005). This study was based on educational theory of pragmatism. The theory is relevant to the study because the art of EE involves entrepreneurial skills which are acquired and developed through training, practice and experience.

The Social Learning Theory of Career Choice by Krumboltz (1996) emphasizes the person-environment interaction and attempts to explain how occupational preferences and skills are acquired and how selections of courses, occupations, and fields of work are made. The theory identified interactions between an individual's genetic factors, environmental conditions, learning experiences, cognitive and emotional responses and performance skills that produce movement along one career path or another. Combinations of these factors interact in different ways to produce different career decisions. According to Krumboltz (1996) internal and external influences; which could either be constraints or facilitators, shape the nature and number of available career options and the way the individual responds to them. The Social Learning Theory highlights four influencers of career choice process, which include: Genetic Endowment and Special Abilities, Environmental Conditions and Events, Learning Experiences and Task Approach Skills. Genetic endowment and special abilities include gender, age, physical appearance and characteristics, intelligence and ethnic factors. Environmental conditions and events category has micro level and macro level conditions and events that may be due to human actions, such as social, cultural, political, economic and natural factors. The interaction between the undergraduate students and environmental characteristics seem to condition and influence preference for different careers, including agriculture. Learning experiences are divided into instrumental learning experience and associative learning experience. In instrumental learning, experiences occur when an individual is positively reinforced or punished for the exercise of some behaviour and its associated cognitive skills. People tend to repeat activities for which they receive positive reinforcement and often this repetition can lead to mastery of skills and an intrinsic interest in the task. On the other hand, people tend to avoid activities in which they receive negative reinforcement or punishment and they learn to dislike these behaviours. Mitchell and Krumboltz (1996) reported that people are engaged in instrumental learning experiences when they learn from the consequences of their own behaviour. Task approach skill is the last category which is generated through the learning experiences of the individual. Task approach skills are skills that are acquired based on the interaction between learning experiences, genetic endowment and environmental influences. The task approach skills affect the outcome of each task. This means that the interactions of the four categories of the Social Learning Theory enable the individual to bring to each new task a set of skills, performance standards and values, work habits, perceptual and cognitive processes, mental sets and emotional responses. This theory is relevant to this study due to its emphasis on previous learning and transfer of learned skills to solve problems. Undergraduate students rely on

their previous knowledge and skills acquired in EE, and transfer same to real life situation to tackle the need for employment.

2.2 Empirical framework

Entrepreneurship and Entrepreneurship Education (EE) have been described as starters of economic growth (Sredojevic, 2005). Shane (2003) explained EE based on a model developed, as entrepreneurial process with the following elements: Individual Attitudes, Environment, Entrepreneurial Opportunities, Discovery, Opportunity Exploitation, and finally, Execution. A review of the literature suggests that there has been steady interest over the years in seeking to understand students' interest in entrepreneurship (Postigo and Tamborini, 2007).

Various researchers in both developed and developing countries have emphasized the importance of EE. For instance, colleges and universities in India and the US have established education and training programmes to foster entrepreneurship, centres for entrepreneurial studies and even business incubators, such as the Society for Innovation & Entrepreneurship (SINE) at the Indian Institute of Technology in Mumbai, and the Life Sciences Business Development Centre and Innovation Centre on the campus of the Medical College of Georgia (MCG) in Augusta, Georgia (Birley, 2002).

Obisanya (2010) reported that the introduction of entrepreneurship education brought striking changes in Kenyan youth unemployment pattern, and entrepreneurship education is now offered in all Vocational and Technical Institutions from Youth Polytechnic to National Polytechnic level. This programme is serviced by the M. Sc. programme in Entrepreneurship at the Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology (JKUAT) and a higher Diploma course at the Kenya Technical Teachers' College (KTTC). Research studies have shown that there is a significant relationship between EE and career intention after graduation. Uduak and Aniefiok (2011) surveyed 500 Nigerian undergraduate students from two Universities and reported that exposure to entrepreneurship education influenced career intentions of tertiary education students. Obisanya (2010) found from a case study of a Nigerian University that EE had great impression on students and affected work place preference for career selection and influenced 94% of the respondents to develop interest in working for themselves after graduation. Bassey and Olu (2008) investigated how students' perception of tertiary EE relate to graduate self employment potential in Nigeria using a sample of 690 students in three universities. The findings showed that there was a significant relationship between students' perception of University administration's provision for tertiary entrepreneurship education, curriculum objectives for tertiary entrepreneurship education, instructional methods for tertiary EE, quality and quantity of tertiary EE instructors and students' entrepreneurial traits and graduate self-employment potential. Luke and Jason (2007) found that EE had an impact on students' inclination and plan. The study indicated, however, that, what is unclear is the extent to which such education impacts on the level of graduate entrepreneurship or whether it enables graduates to become more effective entrepreneurs. Wilson, Kickul and Marlino (2007) found that, entrepreneurship education could also increase student's interest in entrepreneurship as a career. Urve, Kolbe and Toomas (2006) identified students' attitudes and intentions toward entrepreneurship, their findings showed that despite a considerable share of respondents thinking about entrepreneurship, most of them do not want to start business after graduation, but postpone this to a more distant future. Owusu-Ansah (2004) studied the impact of EE on career intentions and aspirations of tertiary students in Ghana and found that an overwhelming 77.9% of the survey respondents indicated they were motivated to a large extent to initiate business start-ups. Indication was also that 86.7% of the survey respondents felt equipped with skills and competencies to initiate and run their own businesses. A study by Varela and Jimenez (2001) showed that there is a correlation between a university's investment in the promotion of entrepreneurship and the percentage of students becoming entrepreneurs. Tkachev and Kolvreid (1999) findings showed that the self employment intentions among students could be increased through Entrepreneurship Training Programme (ETP). Additional research by Autio, Keeley, Klofsten and Ulfstedt (1997) found that EE creates a positive image for the entrepreneurs and contributes to the choice of entrepreneurship as a professional alternative by graduates. The aim of this present study is to examine EE and attitude of undergraduate students to self employment intentions among tertiary students in Mubi area of Adamawa State, Nigeria.

3. Research questions

Seven research questions guided the study as follow:

- (1) What previous experience do respondents have in doing business?

- (2) What motivated the respondents to do business in the past?
- (3) What are the perceived barriers to starting business venture?
- (4) What level of skills do students acquire after completing an EE course?
- (5) What are the benefits of EE?
- (6) Which work places do students' prefer to work after graduation?
- (7) What are the opinions of students about self employment due to exposure to EE?

4. Methodology

The study used descriptive survey design. A total of 370 final year students were drawn from two tertiary institutions, Adamawa State University and Federal Polytechnic, both in Mubi, Adamawa State, Nigeria. Final year degree students in the Departments of Crop Production, Agricultural Economics/Extension, and Animal Production/Fisheries; Higher National Diploma (HND) final year students in Biology, Food Science, Microbiology, Chemistry, Biochemistry; and National Diploma (ND) final year students in Animal Health Production, Agricultural Technology, Crop Production Technology and Horticulture/Orchard Management in 2011/2012 academic session were used for the study. These category of students were chosen because they are about to face their professional career choice and they belong to the highest entrepreneurial inclination segment of the population. To achieve the objective of the research, data were collected through a questionnaire titled Entrepreneurship Education and Self Employment Intentions Questionnaire (EESIQ). The questionnaire had three sections. Section "A" examined the previous experience of respondents in business ventures, reasons for engagement in and owners of such business. Section "B" contained 20 item questions with a 4 point Likert - scale which ranged from Strongly Agree (4 points) to Strongly Disagree (1 point) to answer the research questions raised for the study.

In section B, items 1-10 measured the students' perceived barriers to business start-up. The items generated included: lack of financial resources, lack of business management competence, how to explore business opportunities, lack of business ideas, lack of business advice, fear of failure, lack of information about business start-up and lack of marketing skills. Items 11-20 measured the benefits of entrepreneurship education. The items were creating awareness of business opportunities, developing creativity, building of self confidence, giving exposure to entrepreneurship process, developing resourcefulness, improving my planning skills, making me entrepreneur oriented, giving skills needed for self employment, giving motivation to start my own business and giving financial management skills.

Section "C" examined career intentions and the skills acquired by students after acquiring entrepreneurship education. Students' career intention was measured by asking a question about their immediate career choice upon graduation. Categorical answers were listed as follows: Further studies; Self employment; Employment; Further studies and part-time business; Employment and part-time. Students were to tick the most applicable to their career choice. The level of skills acquired by students was grouped into 3; Low, Moderate and High. The students were asked to rate accordingly.

Two experts carried out the face and content validations of the instrument. The reliability coefficient of the questionnaire by test-retest was 0.84. The questionnaires were administered to all the sampled students by the researchers. Frequency counts and percentages were used to analyze the data and answer the research questions.

5. Results

5.1 Research question one

What previous experience do respondents have in doing business?

Eighty-seven percent (78%) of the respondents ever engaged in business, seventy-seven percent (84%) are males and the age range of eighty-nine percent (86%) of respondents fall between 20-30years. Respondents that never engaged in business attached the reasons to schooling, lack of business idea, lack of business opportunity and lack of start up finance.

5.2 Research question two

What motivated the respondents to do business in the past?

Personal interest (43%) mostly influenced the respondents to engage in business followed by parents/guardian

(29%), desire to make money (20%) while relative has least influence (8%); the businesses were mainly owned by self (68%), parents/guardian (12%), a relative (10%) and employer (10%).

5.3 Research question three

What are the perceived barriers to starting business venture?

The main barriers to starting new business venture are lack of finance resources (98%), fear of failure (95%), lack of marketing skills (95%) and how to explore business opportunities (92%). The least perceived barrier is lack of business advice (80%)

5.4 Research question four

What level of skills do students acquire after completing an EE course?

All the respondents rated the skills they acquire from EE positively, Moderate (63%), High (34.5%), Low (2.5%)

5.5 Research question five

What are the benefits of EE?

Ninety-three percent (93%) of the respondents attested to the benefit of EE as positive because it creates awareness of business opportunities, develops creativity, builds self confidence, develops resourcefulness, develops planning skills, makes one entrepreneur oriented, exposes one to entrepreneurship process, develops skills for self-employment, and financial management skills.

5.6 Research question six

Which work places do students' prefer to work after graduation?

The most preferred place of work by students after graduation is self-employment (58%), multinational firm (18%) while public and private sectors (12%) each respectively.

5.7 Research question seven

What are the opinions of respondents about self employment due to exposure to EE?

The opinions of respondents about self employment and career intentions as a result of their exposure to EE are self-employment (70%); further study/part time business (18%), further study and employment/part time (6% each) and employment (0%). EE's influence on the perception of respondents about self employment is positive and high; very large extent (40%), large extent (38%), some extent (22%) and no extent (0%). Thus, respondents' opinion is that EE has positive impact on them and their attitude towards self employment.

6. Discussion

The result of the study showed that EE have significant impact on self employment and career intention of undergraduate students after graduation whether they had business experience or not and motivated to do business by whatever reasons. This position is corroborated by Luke and Jason (2007) that EE had an impact on students' inclination and plan; also, Uduak and Aniefiok (2011) reported that exposure to EE influenced career intentions of Nigerian tertiary students; and Wilson, Kickul and Marlino (2007) found that EE could also increase student's interest in entrepreneurship as a career.

Despite the barriers to starting a business venture, all the respondents rated the skills they acquire from EE as positive and beneficial. Obisanya (2010) found that EE had great impression on students and affected work place preference for career selection and influenced students to develop interest in working for themselves after graduation. The most preferred place of work by students after graduation is self-employment (as high as 58%), while public and private sectors are the least preferred (12%) each. This is a good trend of re-orientation of the graduates from waiting for jobs and beginning to think and see themselves as job creators because of their exposure to EE. Though, Urve, Kolbe and Toomas (2006) reported that a considerable number of students share thinking about entrepreneurship, most of them do not want to start business after graduation, but postpone this to a more distant future. EE increased understanding of entrepreneurship transforming students from job seekers to job creators (Basse and Archibong, 2005). Owusu-Ansah (2004) found that many students were motivated to a large extent to initiate business start-ups because they felt equipped with skills and competencies to initiate and run their own businesses due to their exposure to EE. EE raises students' awareness about self employment as a career (European

Union, 2002); and EE develops and stimulates entrepreneurial process, providing all tools necessary for starting up new ventures (Postigo and Tomborini, 2002).

The opinions of students about self employment and career intentions as a result of their exposure to EE are mainly self-employment (70%) and further study/part time business (18%). EE's influence on the perception of respondents about self employment is positive and high. Thus, respondents' opinion is that EE has positive impact on them and their attitude towards self employment. This finding is supported by Autio, Keeley, Klofsten and Ulfstedt (1997) who found that EE creates a positive image for entrepreneurs and contributes to the choice of entrepreneurship as a professional alternative by graduates; also Tkachev and Kolvereid (1999) findings showed that the self employment intentions among students could be increased through Entrepreneurship Training Programme (ETP).

7. Conclusion

EE refer to all forms of knowledge delivery that seek to empower the individual to create real wealth in the economic sector, thereby advancing the cause of development of the nation as a whole. EE is an imperative that could make a positive contribution to improving the entrepreneurship orientation of people, leading to the acquisition of skills, creativity, confidence, drive and courage to create employment for self and others. EE makes education and training to be functional and useful to individuals and the nation at large. It tackles the problems of graduate unemployment, idleness and all other vices associated with them. So, it is recommended that EE should be included in the curricula of all educational institutions at all levels in Nigeria. EE has positive impact on all students exposed to it and their attitude towards self employment.

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