

ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION AS A TOOL FOR REDUCING UNEMPLOYMENT IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The recent times have experienced a geared interest towards entrepreneurship. This is because of its global capacity for socioeconomic growth and development. Developing countries are therefore focusing on entrepreneurship as a useful instrument for their economic development. Nigeria is not left out in this for the fact that it uses entrepreneurship education as a tool for inculcating entrepreneurial mindset in the youth. The Nigerian government has mandated a compulsory inclusion of entrepreneurship education into the curriculum of higher educational institutions and this is a step towards development. This paper hypothesizes that entrepreneurship education can serve as a useful tool for reducing unemployment in Nigeria and the effect of entrepreneurship education was tested using two variables (entrepreneurship attitude and intention). Test results show that entrepreneurship education is a viable tool for reducing unemployment in Nigeria.

Keywords: *Entrepreneurship, Entrepreneurship education, Unemployment, Attitude and Intention.*

INTRODUCTION

Background to the study

Integrating the steps involved in the entrepreneurial process into the curriculum of higher educational institutions in Nigeria is a step towards sharpening students' entrepreneurial mindset. It has become the belief of some people that entrepreneurs are born and therefore, teaching entrepreneurship becomes unnecessary. Although entrepreneurship is partly a result of genetic features of the individual and the impact of social environment, an important part can still be enhanced, developed and articulated through education and training (Abari et al 2016). It should however be noted that for one to be a successful entrepreneur, he/she needs to learn the skills (Griffin and Hammis, 2001). Entrepreneurship education is designed to teach the skills and knowledge that are imperative to starting an entrepreneurial venture.

The reality of starting a business requires overpowering many challenges such as start-up capital constraints, penetrating into the market and sustainability of the business (Aliyu, & Bambale, 2016). The processes of emergence, behaviour and performance of indigenous entrepreneurs were separately and in combinations affected not by a single but multiple factors, in ranging degrees. These factors include economic, socio-cultural, ecological, managerial,

educational, developmental, experiential, technological, structural, ethical and innovative issues (Ogundele 2007). Many people have a clear intention of starting a business, but they failed to start because they could not overcome some of these challenges (Abubakar 2017). Entrepreneurship education therefore equips students with the necessary entrepreneurial competencies, knowledge and skills geared towards the pursuit of a career in entrepreneurship; Ooi, Selvarajah & Meyer, 2011). The skills and knowledge acquired from this education would be instrumental to their entrepreneurial pursuit.

Statement of the problem

All higher institutions in Nigeria have been mandated by the federal government to integrate entrepreneurship education into the curriculum of all students, irrespective of their courses of study. This is meant to inculcate in students the entrepreneurial mindset, the intention to start their own businesses, and to become job providers rather than job seekers. This leads to poverty alleviation and -economic development of the country. In line with the federal government policy directive which stipulated the introduction of entrepreneurship education into the curricula of all higher education institutions in the country with a view to re-orientating all graduates of Nigerian tertiary education system towards entrepreneurial self-efficacy, value creation and self-employment, University of Lagos Nigeria offers a compulsory general course in entrepreneurship, GST 307 to all her students in their third year of study. However, direct entry students take the course in their fourth year of study. This course is designed with the objective to equip students with the requisite entrepreneurial skills to positively transform the society through creativity and innovation.

It becomes imperative to assess the decision of the federal government of introducing entrepreneurship education into the curriculum of higher educational institutions in Nigeria and also to assess the extent to which the robust objective of UNILAG GST 307 has been achieved.

Objectives, significance and scope of the study

The objective of this study is to assess the potency of entrepreneurship education as a tool for unemployment reduction in Nigeria. This study was conducted on the undergraduate students of University of Lagos, Akoka, Lagos State, Nigeria, who have taken a course in entrepreneurship in the University. Results from this study would be useful in assisting policy makers in formulating relevant policies or updating already existing ones. Also, the results would be instrumental for the relevant stakeholders, such as the ministry of education, the curriculum developers and the lecturers who execute the teaching process to evaluate the present curriculum of entrepreneurship education in terms of relevance, content and method of delivery.

Research questions

This paper attempts to provide answers to the following two research questions:

- i. Do the students possess positive or negative entrepreneurial attitudes?*
- ii. Are the students intending to become entrepreneurs after graduating?*

Research hypotheses

This paper tests the following null and alternative hypotheses:

H₀: Entrepreneurship education cannot serve as a useful tool for reducing unemployment in Nigeria

H₁: Entrepreneurship education can serve as a useful tool for reducing unemployment in Nigeria

LITERATURE, MATERIALS AND METHOD

Entrepreneurship, entrepreneurship education and unemployment

Entrepreneurship rests on a theory of economy and society and innovation is its specific tool (Drucker 2015). Entrepreneurship is both economic and social application of innovation, that it, it is the practical implementation of innovation to serve socio-economic developmental purposes (Yomi-Akinola, 2016). Entrepreneurship is too risky, thereby making it a scarce resource that should be encouraged by giving some protection to reduce the risk entrepreneurs take (Imhonopi et. al. 2016). It is the capacity and willingness to develop, organize and manage a business venture along with any of its risks in order to make a profit. Traditionally, it is defined as the process of designing, launching and running a new business, which typically begins as a small business, such as a startup company, offering a product, process or service for sale or hire (Riitta et.al. 2012). It has also been defined as the process by which an individual (or team) identifies a business opportunity and acquires and deploys the necessary resources required for its exploitation e.g. developing a business plan, hiring the human resources, acquiring financial and material resources, providing leadership, and being responsible for the venture's success or failure. (Hisrich and Robert, 2011). Entrepreneurship is the process of discovering new ways of combining resources.

Human beings have behaviours that can be developed through learning, that is entrepreneurship education (Stokes et. al. 2010) and training. However, researches show that some authors have tried to distinguish between entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurship training, but Toit and Gaotlhobogwe (2018) submits that both entrepreneurship education and training complement each other in entrepreneurship development. They further opine that the process (developing learners' entrepreneurship knowledge and skills and helping them to realize the purpose and importance of entrepreneurship in society) is no less important than the result (having an enterprise or business). Entrepreneurship education can be defined as the field of education designed to inculcate innovation and enterprise in students as well as to arouse their intentions and attitudes towards entrepreneurship (Yomi-Akinola 2016). As cited in Toit and Gaotlhobogwe (2018), McGuigan (2016) defines entrepreneurship education as knowledge, skills and attitudes which contribute to entrepreneurial thinking and actions that learners can apply in their everyday lives. Entrepreneurship education in universities is aimed at inculcating entrepreneurial skills and attitudes in students to motivate entrepreneurial intentions or increased considerations of entrepreneurship as a career by graduates (Middleton, 2010). It also refers to the conscious effort of an educator targeted at inculcating entrepreneurial skills in learners (Ekpoh & Edet, 2011).

Unemployment, by default, is the difference between the labour gainfully employed at the wages and working conditions that exist in a country, and the amount of labour available in that country. However, Gbosi (2006) defines unemployment as a situation in which people who are

willing to work at the prevailing wage rate are unable to find jobs. The International Labour Organization (ILO) explains the unemployed in this manner, “the unemployed is a member of the economically active population, who are without work but available for and seeking for work, including people who have lost their jobs and those who have voluntarily left work (World Bank, 1998). The application of this definition across countries has been faulted, especially for the purpose of comparison and policy formulation, as countries characteristics are not the same in their commitment to resolving unemployment problems. (Douglason et al, 2006).

Entrepreneurship intention and attitude

Research indicates that attitudes and intentions are two constructs that have become yardstick in assessing the impact of entrepreneurship education on university students (Vestergaard, Moberg, & Jogensen, 2012). University level entrepreneurship education is of critical importance in fostering entrepreneurial intentions and attitudes among undergraduate and postgraduate students (Adedapo and Yomi-Akinola, 2017). A study of the impact of entrepreneurship education on students as a tool for reducing unemployment therefore requires an examination of their entrepreneurship attitude and intention. Understanding the intention and attitudes of the students could help in developing more vital and effective entrepreneurship education (Gibson et al., 2011). Attitude according to Pulka et al. (2014) is the degree or extent to which an individual likes or dislikes something. Hence attitude can either be positive or negative. It is the manner in which a person reacts after being confronted with certain stimuli.

According to Ajzen’s Theory of Planned behavior, the immediate antecedent of behaviour is the intention to perform the given behaviour. Intentions capture the motivational factors that influence a behaviour. Intentions indicate how strong a person’s willingness is to perform a behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). Entrepreneurship intention therefore is the willingness to become an entrepreneur. The stronger the intention to engage in a behaviour, the more likely should be its performance. Hence the bigger the success of behavior prediction or actual behaviour (Ozaralli and Rivenburgh, 2016). If entrepreneurship education actually contributes to entrepreneurial intention of students, then the sustainability of entrepreneurship education would be a meaningful activity and a way of achieving its sustainability is by identifying those factors contributing to it with a view to ensuring its enhancement (Abubakar 2017)

An overview of unemployment in Nigeria

Nigeria has the largest army of unemployed and under-employed youths in Africa. One out of every three Nigerian is either unemployed or under-employed. 54% of Nigerian youths were unemployed in 2012 while currently, 80% of our youths are without jobs (Source: Nigerian Bureau of Statistics). One of the greatest challenges facing the Nigeria economy is unemployment which has maintained a rising trend over the years. It is a great problem associated with both rural and urban communities of the Nigeria economy.

Statistics have shown that over sixty percent of Nigerian population is made up of young people below the age of 35. About eighty percent of these youths are either unemployed or under-employed and this made many observers to predict that the Nigerian Youthful Population is like a time bomb waiting to be detonated (Source: Nigeria Bureau of Statistics, 2016).

Linking Entrepreneurship and Unemployment

The relationship between unemployment and entrepreneurship can best be described from two broad psychological perspectives. A summary of this is drawn from the work of Asad, Ali and Islam (2014):

These two perspectives are called the Schumpeter and Refugee effects. The Schumpeter effect relates to a negative relationship between entrepreneurship and unemployment while the Refugee effect describes a positive relationship between unemployment and entrepreneurship. The Refugee positive relationship occurs when increased rate of unemployment pushes or motivate people to generate innovative and creative ideas in solving identified problems thereby nurturing these ideas into successful enterprises. This leads to an increase in the number of enterprises established and hence increased entrepreneurship activities. The Schumpeter negative effect on the other hand occurs when entrepreneurship activities increase in the economy (this could be as a result of springing newly springing up enterprises or an expansion in existing ones through innovation), entrepreneurs would need employees to work for them or to join their workforce. This reduces the number of unemployed in that country by forcing or pulling down unemployment rate. Simply put, the Refugee positive relationship is experienced when unemployment increases and it causes entrepreneurship activities to increase, while Schumpeter negative relationship occurs when increased entrepreneurship activities lead to reduced unemployment.

Materials and method

This study adopts the descriptive research design. Data was collected using questionnaires. This study was carried out on 150 randomly selected students of University of Lagos, Nigeria who have taken entrepreneurship courses at either their third year or fourth year of study in the University. Two variables (entrepreneurial attitude and intention) were tested using research questions. Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS 20) was used to analyze data. Descriptive analysis of the research questions and analysis of research hypotheses using chi-square were carried out respectively. Also, comparative analyses were carried out on entrepreneurship attitude and entrepreneurship intention between the two genders.

RESULTS:

Table 3.1 Gender Distribution of Students

Sex	Frequency	Percent
Male	92	61.3
Female	58	38.7
Total	150	100.0

Source: Field Study, 2017

The table 3.1 above shows that more than half, 92(61.3%) of the students are male, while the others, 58 (38.7%) are female.

Answering research questions

Research question one: Do the students possess positive or negative attitudes towards entrepreneurship?

Table 3.2 Descriptive analysis of entrepreneurship attitude

Items	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Starting my own business sounds attractive to me	6	6	1	57	18	30	32	4.95	1.57
%	4.0	4.0	.7	38.0	12.0	20.0	21.3		
I can spot a good opportunity long before others can	2	1	4	38	32	24	49	5.43	1.38
%	1.3	.7	2.7	25.3	21.3	16.0	32.7		
To start my own company would probably be the best way for me to take advantage of my education	2	9	4	12	16	58	49	5.70	1.27
%	1.3	6.0	2.7	8.0	10.7	38.7	32.7		
I excel at identifying opportunities		3	6	14	35	24	68	6.76	8.29
%	0	2.0	4.0	9.3	23.3	16.0	45.3		
I am confident that I would succeed if I start my own business	0	0	2	19	24	48	57	5.92	1.08
%	0	0	1.3	12.7	16.0	32.0	38.0		
I personally consider entrepreneurship to be highly desirable career alternative for me	4	1	7	5	43	31	59	5.74	1.39
%	2.7	.7	4.7	3.3	28.7	20.7	39.3		
It would be easy for me to start my own business	4	7	11	35	35	58	0	5.76	1.30
%	2.7	4.7	7.3	23.3	23.3	38.7	0		
Nothing is more exciting than seeing my ideas turn into reality	3	2	17	8	17	36	67	5.73	1.56
%	2.0	1.3	11.3	5.3	11.3	24.0	44.7		
I would rather found a new company than be the manager of an existing one	2	11	14	20	31	20	52	5.23	1.69
%	1.3	7.3	9.3	13.3	20.7	13.3	34.7		

Source: Field Survey, 2017

1= strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=slightly disagree, 4=neutral, 5=slightly agree, 6=agree, 7=strongly agree, 8=Mean, 9=standard deviation. Weighted mean=4.0, Grand mean=5.69

Table 3.2 above shows items used to test students' attitude towards entrepreneurship. A 7-point Likert scale was used and the result shows that the students have positive attitude towards entrepreneurship. This is evident in the result of the grand mean (5.69) which is greater than the weighted mean (4.0).

Table 3.3 Comparative analysis of entrepreneurship attitude

Gender	Item 1	Item 2	Item 3	Item 4	Item 5	Item 6	Item 7	Item 8	Item 9
X	4.8913	5.3152	5.5652	7.1848	5.8696	5.7935	5.9130	5.7717	5.0870
Male N	92	92	92	92	92	92	92	92	92
Sd.	1.60669	1.46707	1.30346	10.55069	1.04005	1.58661	1.38002	1.61111	1.76444
X	5.0517	5.6207	5.9310	6.1034	6.0172	5.6552	5.5172	5.6724	5.4655
Female N	58	58	58	58	58	58	58	58	58
Sd.	1.52663	1.24008	1.19740	1.19487	1.14695	1.03537	1.15836	1.50307	1.55840
X	4.9533	5.4333	5.7067	6.7667	5.9267	5.7400	5.7600	5.7333	5.2333
Total N	150	150	150	150	150	150	150	150	150
Sd.	1.57300	1.38746	1.27204	8.29524	1.08124	1.39717	1.30913	1.56585	1.69253

Table 3.3 above shows result from the comparative analysis of male and female entrepreneurship attitude. With a weighted mean of 4.0, grand mean for male responses to all items is 5.71 while that of female is 5.67, male respondents have greater positive attitudes towards entrepreneurship. Consequently, the entrepreneurship course taken by the students have greater positive impact on the entrepreneurship attitude of male than on the female students.

Research question two: Are the students intending to become entrepreneurs after graduating?

Table 3.4 Descriptive analysis of entrepreneurship intention

Item	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
My professional goal is becoming an entrepreneur	4		1	19	13	56	57	6.0	1.21
Percent (%)	2.7	0.	.7	12.7	8.7	37.	38.	6	6
I will make every effort to start and run my own firm	5		8	18	19	27	73	5.8	1.32
Percent (%)	3.3	0	5.	12.0	12.	18.	48.	8	
I'm determined to create a firm in the future	2	4	5	28	16	38	57	5.7	1.54
Percent (%)	1.3	2.	3.	18.7	10.	25.	38.	9	
I've got the strong intention to start a firm some day	0.0	6	11	38	23	32	40	6.3	8.36
Percent (%)	0	4.	7.	25.3	15.	21.	26.	1	
I'm ready to make anything to be an entrepreneur	0	4	2	5	33	18	33	5.2	1.46
Percent (%)	0.0	2.	1.	3.3	22.	12.	22.	2	
To start my own company would probably be the best way for me to take advantage of my education	0.0	8	7	2	29	23	46	5.5	1.52
Percent (%)	0.0	5.	4.	1.3	19.	15.	30.	2	

I would rather found a new company than be the manager of an existing one.	0.0	10	4	4	21	14	34	5.3	2.01
								3	
	0.0	6.	2.	2.7	14.	9.3	22.		
Percent (%)		7	7		0		7		

Source: Field Survey, 2017

1= strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=slightly disagree, 4=neutral, 5=slightly agree, 6=agree, 7=strongly agree, 8= Mean, 9=standard deviation. Weighted mean=4.0, Grand mean=5.73

Table 3.5 Have you ever seriously considered becoming an entrepreneur?

Status	Frequency	Percent
Yes	125	83.3
No	25	16.7
Total	150	100.0

Source: Field Study, 2017

Table 3.4 above shows items used to test students' entrepreneurship intention. Also, a 7 point Likert scale was used and the result shows that the calculated mean of each item is higher than the weighted mean, which reveals that students possess positive entrepreneurship intention. Also, item one has the highest mean which implies that many of the students intend to become entrepreneurs in life. Furthermore, table 3.5 reveals that majority (83.3%) of the students are seriously considering becoming entrepreneurs while the remaining (16.7%) are not.

Table 3.6 Comparative analysis of entrepreneurship intention

Gender		Item 1	Item 2	Item 3	Item 4	Item 5	Item 6	Item 7
Male	X	5.9130	5.5761	5.5109	5.1630	5.4891	5.0000	5.2717
	N	92	92	92	92	92	92	92
	Sd	1.31477	1.73036	1.50088	1.48455	1.51545	1.77900	1.92784
Female	X	5.8276	6.1379	5.8103	5.3276	5.5690	5.5172	5.9310
	N	58	58	58	58	58	58	58
	Sd	1.33952	1.11526	1.41987	1.44353	1.55724	1.39223	1.47330
Total	X	5.8800	5.7933	5.6267	5.2267	5.5200	5.2000	5.5267
	N	150	150	150	150	150	150	150
	Sd	1.32057	1.54267	1.47255	1.46616	1.52703	1.65477	1.78997

Table 3.6 above shows result from the comparative analysis of male and female entrepreneurship intention. With a weighted mean of 4.0, grand mean for male responses to all items is 5.42 while that of female is 5.73, female students have greater positive entrepreneurship intentions despite the fact that male respondents were more than female respondents. Consequently, the entrepreneurship course taken by the students have greater positive impact on the entrepreneurship intention of female than on that of male students. By implication, this paper establishes that more female students are intending to become entrepreneurs than the male students.

Hypotheses Testing

This section presents results of the hypothesis testing. The null and alternative hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance using Chi-square Analysis. As a decision rule, a hypothesis is regarded as significant if the p value is less than 0.05, otherwise it is not significant.

H₀: Entrepreneurship education cannot serve as a useful tool for reducing unemployment in Nigeria

H₁: Entrepreneurship education can serve as a useful tool for reducing unemployment in Nigeria

Table 3.3 Summary of Chi – Square Analysis for Testing Hypotheses

Chi square	Value	Degree of freedom	P value
Pearson Chi-Square	176.199	30	.000

Source: Authors Compilation using SPSS 20

The table 3.3 above shows the chi square value from hypotheses testing. The Pearson's chi-square statistic value used in testing the hypotheses reveals that the hypothesis was significant ($\chi^2 = 176.199$, P value = 0.000 < 0.05).

The null hypothesis - entrepreneurship education cannot serve as a useful tool for reducing employment in Nigeria - is hereby rejected, while alternative hypothesis - entrepreneurship education can serve as a useful tool for reducing employment in Nigeria is accepted.

DISCUSSION

It could be inferred from the foregoing that the compulsory entrepreneurship course which University of Lagos students have taken have motivated quite a large percentage of them towards being entrepreneurs. Rather than looking forward to becoming job seekers, they rather prefer aspiring to become job providers, thereby putting into use the skills acquired through entrepreneurship education received. The results from the questionnaire items reveals that due to the entrepreneurship education received at University of Lagos, a large percentage of the students have positive attitudes towards entrepreneurship, prefer entrepreneurship as their career option and are planning to practice it. This corroborates the work of Eburu (2015) who did a study on the factors affecting entrepreneurial intentions of students in some selected Turkish universities. The study confirms a positive correlation between the students' success level in entrepreneurship classes and their entrepreneurial intentions. In the same vein, results from this work complement the findings from the study conducted by Yomi-Akinola (2016) on the impacts of entrepreneurship education on students of University of Ibadan, Nigeria. The study finds out a positive relationship between entrepreneurship education which students of University of Ibadan, Nigeria received and their attitudes towards entrepreneurship. This also is in line with the results of findings made by Adedapo and Yomi-Akinola (2017) which reveals that entrepreneurship education can positively affect the attitudes of University of Ibadan students.

In addition, this research has proven that entrepreneurship education has the capacity to significantly reduce unemployment. Using the Pearson's chi-square statistical tool in testing the

hypothesis, the result reveals that the hypothesis was significant ($\chi^2= 176.199$, P value = 0.000 <0.05). Furthermore, results from comparative analysis establish that the positive entrepreneurship attitude found in the students is more concentrated in males than in the female. This means that the male students have greater tendency to practice entrepreneurship (Banu cited in Pulka et.al, 2014) if being given more doses of entrepreneurship education. Albeit the greater tendency for entrepreneurship found in male students, the female students possess more willingness to actually practice entrepreneurship. Comparative analysis of students' entrepreneurship intention reveals that the female students have stronger intentions to engage in entrepreneurship, hence the bigger the success of predictions that they will actually become entrepreneurs (Ozaralli and Rivenburgh, 2016).

CONCLUSION

Entrepreneurship has been viewed as the pillar for 21st century socioeconomic development around the world. It is a step in the right direction for the government to embed entrepreneurship education into the academic curriculum of Nigerian higher educational institutions. It cannot be overstated the role entrepreneurship education has played in impacting into students the entrepreneurial mindset. We also cannot overemphasize the potency of entrepreneurship education in instilling into students the creative and innovative problem solving capability to combat the rapidly growing rate of unemployment in the country. In addition to the hard skills learnt in their various individual departments of study, entrepreneurship education supplies students with the soft skills they need to function effectively in the real world of work. Even though entrepreneurship is not a cure for youth unemployment, several studies have linked entrepreneurship education to reducing unemployment through skills development and the creation of opportunities for self employment (April, 2015; Ekpe, Rasak, Ismail and Abdullah, 2016 as cited in Toit and Gaotlhobogwe (2018). By implications, these authors suggest that educational systems should include teaching entrepreneurship skills into their curricula. This study validates the compulsory inclusion of entrepreneurship courses into the curriculum of Nigerian higher educational institution. However, to ensure its effectiveness, it is important for the government to rise up to the task of making funds available to these educational institutions so as to put in place the necessary facilities to execute effective entrepreneurship education.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Following the findings of this work the author make bold to recommend as following:

- There should be a working partnership between industry and the universities. This could be in form of mentoring and internship provision.
- Universities should be mandated by policy to pattern their entrepreneurship development and entrepreneurial education after the model that works out creativity in the students and not just theoretical practices of entrepreneurial development.
- To seriously combat the menace of unemployment in the country, government should strategize on how to strengthen entrepreneurship education in existing public universities

and other higher educational institutions, rather than creating more. This is a valid measure as posited by UNESCO, International Bureau of Education, (2016), countries struggling with high levels of unemployment may choose to give precedence to skills development or entrepreneurship education to address that particular need of their society.

- With the assistance of large enterprises, government in collaboration with the higher institutions should make funding provision at very low cost available to students who are ready to establish their own business on graduation.

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