

JOURNAL OF BUSINESS AND EDUCATIONAL POLICIES

(A Bi ANNUAL JOURNAL OF THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF POLICY EDUCATORS)

VOL. 15, NO. 2 OCTOBER 2019

Published by



JOURNAL OF BUSINESS AND EDUCATIONAL POLICIES

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ISSN: 0794-3210

Published by



JOURNAL OF BUSINESS AND EDUCATIONAL POLICIES

AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF GENDER DIFFERENCES IN PERCEPTION OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION AS EMPOWERMENT STRATEGY FOR SELF-EMPLOYMENT

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ABSTRACT

For over a decade, entrepreneurship education has been taught as a course in Nigerian tertiary institutions. The aim is to equip the students with saleable skills that will empower them to become self-employed. This study therefore sought to explore if there is gender difference in perception of entrepreneurial needs among students using the Federal Polytechnic, Ilaro as a case study. Constraints to effective teaching of entrepreneurial skill acquisition was also investigated. A survey design was adopted and 400 students from ND II and HND II were selected through random sampling technique for this purpose. The instrument for data collection is a 5-points Likert scale developed by the researcher titled "Students' Perception of Entrepreneurship Education as an Empowerment Strategy for Graduate Self-Employment". The data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics and Chi-square test of independence. The result revealed that students have positive perception of entrepreneurship education as empowerment strategy. The result further showed that male and female students did not differ significantly in their perception of entrepreneurship education as empowerment strategy for self-employment as evidenced from the Chi-square statistic of 4.980 with an associated P-value of 0.173 > (=0.05 significance level. Insufficient time lag for vocational skill acquisition and personal practice for students plus lack of sufficient equipment for practical work were rated high as major constraint to effective teaching of entrepreneurial skill acquisition. Based on the findings, the paper recommends more funding from government to allow the institution adequately equip the entrepreneurship development centre for practical training. The institution should also allot more time to practical aspect of entrepreneurship education.

KEYWORDS: Entrepreneurship Education, Entrepreneurial Needs, Empowerment Strategy, Self-Employment.

Introduction

There is a consensus among researchers and experts that the soaring rate of unemployment in Nigeria is due to mismatch between the training received in schools and the actual needs of industries and other employers of labour. Also, the type of education received in schools focus graduates towards a professional career as employees and did not adequately equip them with desirable skills and competencies for job creation and self-employment. Adejinmola and Olufunmilayo (2009) mentioned in Oyebola, Irefin and Olaposi (2015), succinctly states that the Nigerian educational programmes laid too much emphasis on the value of qualification rather than the holder. In order words, undergraduate struggle hard to obtain degree rather than the knowledge and skills that would make them self-reliant.

To make tertiary education functional, relevant and practical, the Federal Government of Nigeria directed the educational regulatory bodies-Nigerian University Commission (NUC), National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) and National Commission for Colleges of Education to make entrepreneurship education a compulsory course for all undergraduate students in their respective institutions. The aim of this policy is to equip the students with sellable skill that would prompt them to become self-employed without a recourse to government employment upon graduation. As reiterated by Tulgan (1999) and Uche et al. (2009) cited in Akpan and Etor (2013) the primary purpose of entrepreneurial

education is to develop in the learners entrepreneurial capacities and mindsets, which will help them upon graduation to recognize business opportunities, mobilize resources and exploit the opportunity for self-employment.

Researchers across the globe have studied factors which might influence the decision of graduate from tertiary institutions to opt for self-employment. Most of the early studies focused on traits such as tolerance of ambiguity, self-confidence and tolerance risk (Summers, 2000 as mentioned in Dabic, 2012). Subsequent studies however, have identified external influences (politics and capital availability), demographic characteristics (gender, age and education) and social factors (family and community) as influencer of entrepreneurship motivation.

For over a decade entrepreneurship education has been taught as a course in Nigerian tertiary institutions including The Federal Polytechnic, Ilaro. The perception of the students in this institution on the relevance of this course as empowerment strategy might differs. If divers, could it be attributed to gender? This is the basis for conducting this research.

Literature Review

A host of researchers have defined entrepreneurship education. According to Nwosu and Ohia (2009), it is that aspect of education which equips an individual and creates in the person the mindset to undertake the risk of venturing into something new by applying the knowledge and skills acquired in school. Alain (2009) and Akudolu (2010) further described entrepreneurship education as nurturing of entrepreneurial mindsets, attitudes and skills that allows the individual to take charge of the economic situation and to identify opportunities. Entrepreneurship education has the possibility to stimulate consciousness towards self-employment as a career option. Okiti (2009) as cited in Akpan & Etor (2013) also defined entrepreneurship education as the gateway to job opportunities and job creation which would constantly enhance self-reliance and self-employment among graduates.

Across the globe, studies have attested that entrepreneurship education has empowered students to consider self-employment as a career option. Sandholtz (1990) in a survey of 1000 MBA students from top business schools in USA, found that 44% of the respondents wanted to become independent entrepreneurs in contrast to 34% who wished to be high-ranking corporate managers. Scott and Twomey (1988) in a similar survey on English students found that 25% of respondents has business idea and 44% aspired to self-employment. Harrison and Hart (1989) revealed that over 51% of a sample of Northern Ireland students expressed a positive desire to initiate and run their own businesses. Fleming (1992)'s study of Irish graduates who participated in entrepreneurship initiatives and programmes while at college found that 45% of the respondents reported that the course taken had positive effect on their subsequent career decision and 5% had initiated a start-up venture within five years of graduation.

In Africa, Owusu-Ansah (2004) studied the impact of entrepreneurship education on career intentions and aspirations of tertiary students in Ghana and found that 86.7% of

the respondents felt equip with skills and competencies to initiate and run their own businesses and 77.9% are motivated to a very large extent toward self-employment. Evidence from a follow-up study by Owusu-Ansah and Poku (2012) also showed that entrepreneurship education exposed to the business school students of Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology is creating entrepreneurship awareness and encouraging students to include self-employment in their career intentions and aspiration's options as well as inculcating positive attitude towards business start-up.

In Nigeria, Nnadozie, Akanwa & Nnadozie (2013) examined the impact of entrepreneurship education on career aspirations of para-professional librarians-in-training (LIT) in selected polytechnics. They found that there is a paradigm shift in the career aspirations of LITs as many respondents preferred to be self-employed instead of waiting for the scarce traditional/ conventional library-based employment. Onuma (2016) used students of Ebonyi state university to investigate the exposure of undergraduates' students to entrepreneurial education for post- graduation job creation ability. The outcome of his study showed that entrepreneurial education has a significant relationship with post-graduation job creation ability.

Ekpoh and Edet (2011) in their study of the impact of entrepreneurship education on career intentions of tertiary education students in Akwa Ibom and Cross River states, revealed that entrepreneurship education has created inspiring awareness to business opportunity, provides exposure to entrepreneurship process, builds self-confidence, equip students with knowledge and skills that engender self-employment as a career option.

Few studies that have investigated entrepreneurial behaviour from gender perspective found that self-employment is more preferred among men than women (Wilson et al., 2004; Grilo and Irigoyen, 2005; Dubic, 2012, Ndofirepi, Rambe and Dzansi, 2018). Zhang et al. (2009) as cited in Dubic (2012) submitted that gender differences regarding entrepreneurial intention are due to genetic basis of entrepreneurship.

Research Questions

Three research questions were formulated to guide the study.

- How do students perceive entrepreneurship education as empowerment strategy towards self-employment after graduation?
- Does gender influence students' perception of Entrepreneurship Education as empowerment strategy?
- What are the constraints to effective entrepreneurial-vocational skill acquisition?

Research Methodology

Research Design

In this study, survey design was adopted because a representative sample was selected from a population and inferences drawn from the results of the analysis of the available data.

Population of the Study

The population of the study comprised of four thousand eight hundred and sixty-five (4,865) second year Ordinary National Diploma (NDII) and Higher National Diploma (HNDII) students in 2016/2017 academic session (FPI List of Registered Students, 2017). A breakdown of the population showed that there were 1,005 females and 1,947 males in NDII while 750 females and 1,163 males are in HNDII.

Sampling Technique and Sample

The simple random sampling technique which has advantage of ensuring that every member of the population has equal and independent chance of being selected was deployed to select the sample size from the targeted population. 100 females and 120 males in NDII, 80 females and 100 males in HNDII were randomly selected across the 32 departments. Altogether the sample size consist of 180 females and 220 males.

Research Instrument

The collection of data was through a self-developed questionnaire titled "Students' Perception of Entrepreneurship Education as an Empowerment Strategy for Graduate Self-Employment Questionnaire" The instrument was face-validated by an expert in educational research. The reliability of all the items as contained in the questionnaire was also conducted with the Cronbach Alpha method. The questionnaire has three sections. Section A sought the personal data of the respondents such as gender, age, education level and department. Section B was a 5-point Likert type scale consisting of 7 items on perception. Section C consisted of 5 items on the limiting factors. Each item had five response options ranging from Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A) to Disagree (D), Strongly Disagree (SD) and Undecided (U).

The questionnaires were distributed to the selected students during the entrepreneurship practical class and collected on the spot. They were asked to indicate the extent of their agreement or disagreement with each item by ticking an option against each item. This section contained items which measures the relevance of entrepreneurship education as an empowerment strategy to graduate self-employment. All the 400 copies of questionnaire administered were appropriately filled and returned. 5 points scoring pattern was used for each of the item on the 5-point Likert scale. 5 point for strongly agree, 4 points for agree, 3points for strongly disagree, 2 points for disagree and 1 point for undecided.

Descriptive statistics and inferential statistics mainly Chi-square were used for data analysis. The statistical package employed for the analysis was Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20.

Results and Discussions

Reliability test result

A Cronbach alpha of 0.7 is considered to be adequate and optimum if above 0.8 (Nunnally, 1978). The Cronbach alpha test result of .789 as shown in table 1 reveals that the reliability of all items as contained in the questionnaire instrument are reliable in measuring appropriate constructs.

Table 1: Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	No of Items
.789	13

Source: SPSS Output, Version 20

Thus, the closer to one the more reliable is the result. This shows that all questions formulated can be heavily relied on upon the outcome of study findings.

Research Question 1

How do students perceive entrepreneurship education as empowerment strategy for self-employment? The result of the data analysis for the research question is presented on Table 2

Table 2: Students' Response to Relevance of Entrepreneurship Education

Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation
Average responses on Perception to Entrepreneurship Education	4.20	.574

No. of Sub-Variables = 7 for Perception Decision range: Mean score above 3 is significant
Source: SPSS Output, Version 20

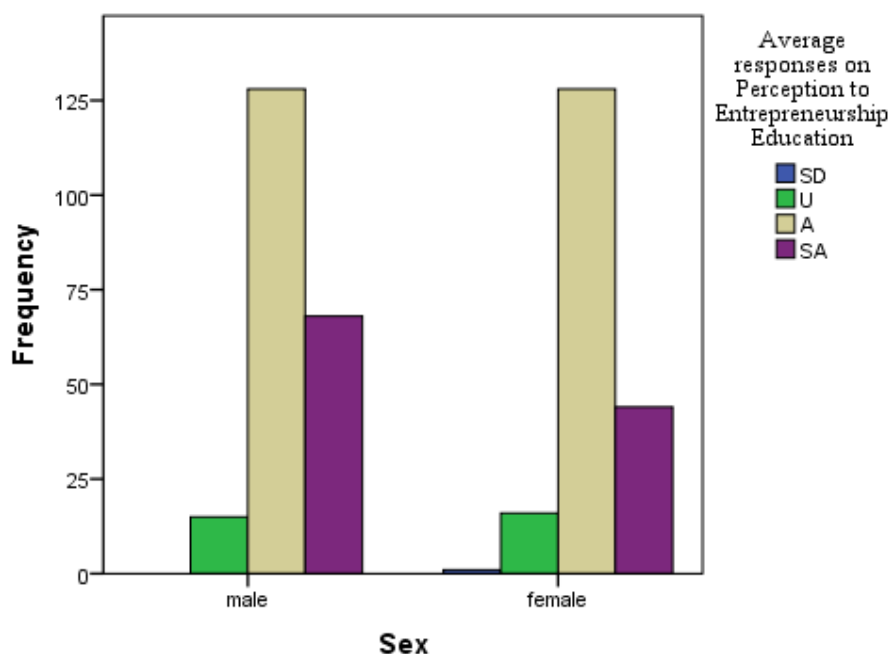
The grand mean response of 4.20 for likert scale of "Agree" on the perception as shown in table 2 is above 3 (undecided) which is significant. This indicate that students have positive perception of entrepreneurship education as empowerment strategy for self-employment from exposure to knowledge and skills needed for job creation and development of students' creative and innovative consciousness.

Research Question 2

Does gender influence students' perception of entrepreneurship education as empowerment strategy for self-employment?

The result for the research question is presented in Figure 1 and Table

Fig 1: Bar Chart Showing Gender Distribution of Respondents and their Perception on Entrepreneurship Education as empowerment strategy



The pictorial representation in figure 1 revealed that male and female students do not differ in their perception of Entrepreneurship education as empowerment strategy for self-employment. The significant test result is presented on Table 3

Table 3: Sex * Average responses on Perception to Entrepreneurship Education Cross tabulation

		Perception to Entrepreneurship Education in Relation to Gender				Total	
		S D	U	A	SA		
S e x	Count	< 5	15	128	68	211	
	Male	Expected Count	< 5	16.4	13.0	59.1	211.0
	% of Total	< 5	3.8%	32.0%	17.0%	52.8%	
	Female	Count	< 5	16	128	44	189
	Expected Count	< 5	14.6	121.0	52.9	189.0	
	% of Total	< 5	4.0%	32.0%	11.0%	47.2%	
Total	Count	< 5	31	256	112	400	

Expected Count	< 5	31.0	256.0	112.0	400.0
% of Total	n < 5	7.8%	64.0%	28.0%	100.0 %

Chi-Square = 4.980

P-value = 0.173 > (= 0.05

Source: *Extracted from SPSS, Version 20.*

Cross-tabulation of gender to average response on perception of relevance of Entrepreneurship Education as revealed in table 3 indicate that there is no significant difference in perception of entrepreneurship education as empowerment strategy for self-employment by male and female students as evidenced from the chi-square statistic of 4.980 with an associated P-value of 0.173> (=0.05 significance level.

Research Question 3

What are the constraints to effective entrepreneurial-vocational skill acquisition?
The students' response are presented in table 4&5

Table 4: Students' Response to Constraints

Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation
Average responses on Constraints to Entrepreneurial-Vocational Skill Acquisition	3.28	1.082

No. of Sub-Variables = 5 for Limitation

Source: *SPSS Output, Version 20*

The grand mean score of 3.28 with a standard deviation of 1.08 is greater than accepted mean score of 3.00. The result shows that students have accepted the items as constraints to effective entrepreneurial skill acquisition.

Table 5 further shows that insufficient time for vocational skill acquisition is ranked 1st position followed by no time allotted to personal practice and insufficient equipment for practical work which ranked 2nd and 3rd positions respectively as the major constraints to skill acquisition.

Table 5: Constraints Rating

Constraints	Percentage Score (%)
Insufficient equipment for the vocational practical work	62.1
Insufficient time lag for vocational skill acquisition	69.8
low vocational skill facilitator- student ratio	54.8
Instructive rather than interactive learning process	51.5
No time provided for extra(personal) practice for students	68.8

Percentage Score =Addition of Percentage Responses on Agreed (4) and Strongly Agree (5) for each of the five (5) Constraints

Source: *Extracted from SPSS, Version 20.*

Conclusion

The findings of the study show that students are positive in their perception of entrepreneurship education as empowerment strategy towards generating self-employment. They agreed that entrepreneurship education empower them with knowledge and skill needed to set up business venture after graduation. The male students' perception of entrepreneurship education as empowerment strategy do not differ significantly from their female counterparts. Majority of the student rate lack of sufficient time for practical aspect of the course, time not allotted for personal practice and inadequacy of equipment as major constraints to effective vocational skill acquisition.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

- The institutions should make the methodology of teaching entrepreneurship education experiential and self-discovery by given maximum attention to the duration and intensity of the practical aspect of the program.
- Government should adequately fund Entrepreneurship education through increased budgetary allocation to tertiary institutions particularly the Polytechnic sector. With adequate funding, institutions will be able to equip the entrepreneurship development centres for practical work and provide adequate training/instructional materials for the program.

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