

ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION AND ACQUISITION OF BUSINESS SKILLS IN NIGERIA TERTIARY INSTITUTION

Zebulom Abule
Department of Management, Faculty of Business Studies
Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria

Email: zebulonabule@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The study adopted the systematic approach to examine the operational impact between the variables entrepreneurship education and acquisition of business skills in Nigeria tertiary institution. The paper revealed that entrepreneurship education has impact on business skills measures. The study concluded that entrepreneurship education improves student's business planning skill in tertiary institution because it exposes students to a lot of business ideas which can be used by students to plan their dream business. It also recommended that entrepreneurship education should be more of practical than theoretical because students tend to remember and retain more of what they practice than what they read.

Key words: *Entrepreneurship Education, Business Skills, System Approach.*

INTRODUCTION

The entrepreneurship spirit is a pre-requisite to an entrepreneurial society and culture. This spirit is required for the overall economic growth of any nation especially developing ones like Nigeria. This is in line with the view of Ojeifo, (2013) that entrepreneurship is the willingness and the ability of an individual, firm or an organization to identify an environmental change and exploit such an opportunity to produce goods and services for public consumption.

Ocho (2005) asserts that entrepreneurship skill training programmes carried out in schools, helps students to gain insight to business planning. This is as (Nwagwu, 2007). Solomon (2007) opine that incorporating skill acquisition programme into entrepreneurship education programme in tertiary institution has gone a long way in building students' business planning skill. It is much easier to develop a good business plan if enthusiasm is matched with logical business thinking. Nevertheless, in the view of Akpomi (2009), the establishment of entrepreneurship skill centres in schools and exposing students to various skill sets has not yielded any positive result in terms of business planning skill. For her, theoretical knowledge of entrepreneurship and business practices is what develops students' business planning skills. It is possible that a participant acquires the basic vocational skill but he or she is unable to prepare a workable business plan.

Aruwa (2004) pointed out that Entrepreneurship Education is a form of educational program designed to help students acquire the spirit of entrepreneurship and all business skills needed for becoming an entrepreneur. Entrepreneurial attitude competences are "dedication to duty and willingness to accept positive as well as negative results of business ventures" (Akudolu, 2010). Entrepreneurship Education helps students to develop the capacity to identify investment opportunities, establish and to run an enterprise successfully. What distinguishes entrepreneurship education from other forms of education is its emphasis on realization of opportunity. These opportunities can be realized through starting a business, introducing new products or ideas or through doing something in a different way with the aim of achieving goals. It is in this regard that the European Commission (2007) presents entrepreneurship as "an individual's ability to turn ideas into action"

The issue of graduate unemployment has remained unabated and many of the students who have passed through the scheme have not shown any signs of having acquired relevant vocational and business skills necessary for establishing an innovative business venture. The level of entrepreneurial intention and understanding of entrepreneurship is quite low among undergraduate students in most of the Tertiary institution in Nigeria. Until recently, Entrepreneurship Education has been treated as a mere theoretical course which students just need to read and pass examinations with good grades without necessarily acquiring business skill. Entrepreneurial Skill Acquisition programs are on low key, which make the students lack basic vocational and business skills that will build their entrepreneurship capacity. Thus this study therefore attempts a unique investigation, based on contextual scope, of the impact of entrepreneurship education on business skills of Nigeria tertiary institution. It will also contribute to the earlier identified knowledge gap through its application of empirical analysis in the investigation of the predictor variable (entrepreneurship education) and measures of business skills (business planning skill, vocational skill and financial skill). Amongst these studies which have assessed the relative association between entrepreneurship education and business skills, there exists congruence in findings which support significant impact between entrepreneurial education and business skills. Therefore there exists knowledge gap made evident by the paucity of research literature on studies which have empirically examined the relative impact of entrepreneurship education on business skills within the geographical confines of a developing Nationality such as Nigeria.

Related Readings

Concept of Entrepreneurship education

Entrepreneurship Education is not just about acquiring entrepreneurial knowledge. If an entrepreneurship course or program must serve the original purpose (which is to combat unemployment), it must help students to develop vocational skills. Vocational skills oriented entrepreneurship education promises to help students not only gain entrepreneurship awareness but to equip them with practical skills and help them establish business venture.

The rate of unemployment in Nigeria is disturbing. In 1992, the World Bank put the Nigerian unemployment rate at 28%. In April 2009, during the discussion of a panel of experts on youth and employment in Washington, the Director of the National Planning Commission of Nigeria, Omotoso (The World Bank, 2009) put the rate of youth unemployment in Nigeria at between 60 to 70 percent. Omotoso (2009) lamented that only 10 percent of graduates can be absorbed in the Nigerian Labour Market. The high rate of unemployment must have contributed to a large extent to the high rate of crime which has graduated in this country from social disturbances and armed robbery attacks, to kidnapping. It appears that these unemployed youths are taking it back on a society that has failed to give them a proper sense of direction through sound education. Aladekomo (2009) maintained that "Sound education which equips students to challenge the status quo and proffer better alternatives is the way out of the present economic quagmire". In this regard, Omotoso (The World Bank, 2009) reported that among the strategies being adopted by Nigeria to redress the ugly situation was reformation of the education sector. However, mere reformation of the education sector cannot result in job creation.

Obanya (2009) opined that: The solution is not increased vocalization of education, as is wrongly being canvassed, but a return to the basics. This means returning to real goals of education, which is the cultivation of human talent and creative/imaginative potentials through all round development. He insisted that for Nigeria to "respond to the changing needs of the world of work (not necessarily the world of direct paid employment", formal and non-formal education in the country should be geared towards inculcating in learners the generic skills of knowledge, communication, adaptability, creativity, team spirit, literacy, information and communication technology (ICT) fluency and lifelong learning. These generic skills are necessary for effective life

in the present ICT – dominated world. They are not job specific. Their acquisition calls for the type of general education found in entrepreneurship. That is, the type of education that equips the learner with the knowledge and skills to desire, seek, recognize and utilize available opportunity to do something new to create wealth for self and others and consequently contribute effectively to the society in this era of global economic crisis.

Entrepreneurship Education Curriculum (EEC)

Curriculum is concerned with the why, what and how of instruction. In other words, it is concerned with the goals and objectives of instruction, the content, organization and evaluation. These curriculum elements form the beacon for the development and implementation of entrepreneurship curriculum. This should constitute a core curriculum for every learner at all levels of education in Nigeria. This is in line with the Consortium for Entrepreneurship Education (2004) maintained that it is a lifelong learning process starting from elementary level to other levels of education and spanning to adult education. Brown (2000) among other educationists shared this view and opined that “the principles of entrepreneurship are increasingly considered valuable for students at all levels”. In this regard, all students at all levels of education in member States of the European Union such as United Kingdom, Cyprus, Ireland, Slovenia etc are exposed to entrepreneurial education (European Commission, 2007). The Consortium for Entrepreneurship Education (CEE-2004) further categorized the learning content of entrepreneurial education into Entrepreneurial skills and Ready skills. The entrepreneurial skills comprise the themes of entrepreneurial processes and entrepreneurial traits/behaviors. The ready skills comprise the themes of business foundations, communications and interpersonal skills, digital skills, economics, financial literacy, professional development, financial management, information management, marketing management, operations management, risk management, and strategic management. In fact, the skills dimension is concerned with specialized skill in any area of human endeavour. Consequently, Anyakoha (1997) classified entrepreneurial skills into personality skills and management related skills. Entrepreneurship education should equip learners with skills not only for understanding their capabilities but also for coping with different situations in life. There is no doubt that the effective implementation of entrepreneurship education curriculum will help learners in Nigeria to develop entrepreneurial capacities and the ability to be self-reliant and self-employed.

Entrepreneurship Education and Business Planning Skill

Lesko (2010) noted that the teaching and learning of entrepreneurship education in tertiary institutions has helped many graduates to acquire relevant vocational skill and business planning skill. Entrepreneurship education exposes students to a lot of business ideas such can be used by students to plan their dream business. By reading about how successful entrepreneurs started, students gain relevant knowledge that can be used for effective business planning. Also in the same vein, a study conducted by Obanya (2008) revealed that the teaching and learning of entrepreneurship education has helped students to learn how to write good business plans for themselves. Similarly, Brown (2000) pointed out that in-depth knowledge of entrepreneurship education makes it easier for students to draft their own business plan. However, Anyakoha (2010) argued that the teaching and learning of entrepreneurship education has not really helped students to gain business skill. He pointed out that the teaching and learning of entrepreneurship education is often treated as a mere academic course to the point that most of the teachers are unable to impart the business skill.

Entrepreneurship Awareness Education and Students’ Vocational Skill

Entrepreneurship awareness education is an academic-based approach to entrepreneurship training (Ocho, 2005). It refers to a form of entrepreneurship educational program that is designed to expose student to theoretical knowledge and concepts about entrepreneurship. Solomon (2007) defined entrepreneurship awareness education as a theory-based approach to the teaching of entrepreneurship course which appeals to the cognitive domain rather than the psychomotor domain. However, Aruwa (2014) noted that teaching entrepreneurship education theoretically without providing practical skills makes it difficult for students to acquire vocational skills.

Entrepreneurship Education and Business Financing Skills

Akpa (2007) pointed that the teaching of entrepreneurship education as an academic course in tertiary institutions in Nigeria exposes students to ideas about how to source for fund in order to start up business ventures. Entrepreneurship education has many concepts and topics that show students how to source out capital to start up business. However, Ojeifo (2013) noted that no matter what students have learnt in entrepreneurship education and other business-related courses, many students do have fund sourcing skill so they are unable to materialize their entrepreneurial dreams. Also Solomon (2007) in his own view held that many students who have learnt ways of sourcing capital to start up their business are unable to apply what they have learnt.

CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis of data and discussion of findings, the study concluded that entrepreneurship education improves student's business planning skill in tertiary institution because it exposes students to a lot of business ideas which can be used by students to plan their dream business. The study also concluded that entrepreneurship education improves student's business financing skills because it gives them ideas about how to source for fund to start their own business ventures. Furthermore, the study concluded that entrepreneurship education improves students' vocational skill by exposing them to theoretical knowledge and concepts about entrepreneurship thereby enabling them to practice what they have learnt instead of only reading about it without engaging in any form of practice.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following suggestions were made:

1. Entrepreneurship education should be complemented with the establishment of entrepreneurship centres to encourage skill acquisition.
2. The study is also recommending that entrepreneurship education should be more of practical than theoretical because students tends to remember and retain more of what they practice than what they read.
3. Lecturers that teach entrepreneurship education should regularly go for trainings to update themselves with new innovations in entrepreneurship education.
4. Technical skills to be emphasized rather than theoretical skills to encourage the economic independence for young school leavers in line with the National Policy on Education

REFERENCES

Akpa, A. (2007). Challenges of the Nigerian entrepreneurs in the twenty first century. Being a paper presented at the maiden annual college of management sciences seminar, University of Mkar.

Akpomi, M.E. (2009). Achieving millennium development goal (MDGs) through teaching entrepreneurship education in Nigeria higher education institution .*European Journal of Social Sciences*, 8(1), 152 – 159.

- Akudolu, L-R.(2001). Curricular issues in entrepreneurship education. *Journal of Science and Computer Education (JOSCED)*. 1 (3) 28 – 35.
- Aladekomo, F.O. (2004). Nigeria educational policy and entrepreneurship. *Journal of Social Sciences* 9(2), 38 - 75.
- Anyakoha, E.U. (1997). Entrepreneurship and vocational education: A contemporary challenge and the way forward. In N. Esomonu (Ed.).Entrepreneurship practices in education. 26 – 43
Umunze: Federal College of Education (Technical).
- Aruwa, S. A. S. (2004). The business of entrepreneurs; A guide entrepreneurial development. *Journal of Development of Business Administration University of Ilorin, Nigeria*, 2(1): 112 – 122.
- Brown, C. (2000). Curriculum for entrepreneurship education: A Review. Kansa City: Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation.
- Consortium for entrepreneurship education (2004).National content standards for entrepreneurship education. Ohio, Columbus. Accessed, 28 August 2009 at www.entre-ed.org/standards_Toolkit/neac.htm
- European Commission (2007). Assessment of compliance with the entrepreneurship education objective in the context of the 2006 Spring Council Conclusions. Accessed 22 August 2009 at ec.europa.eu/enterprise/entrepreneurship.
- Finland Ministry of Education (2009).Guidelines for entrepreneurship education. Finland: Ministry of Education.
- Lesko, T. (2010).Teaching entrepreneurship: The role of education and training the Hungarian experience. Accessed 16 April 2010 at www.nfgm.gov.hu/data/cms1202969/sme_belg.pdf.
- Nwagwu, I. O. (2007).Higher education for self-reliance: an imperative for the Nigerian economy, Port-Harcourt: NEAP Publication.
- Obanya, P. (2008). Curriculum for entrepreneurship education. Unpublished manuscript.
- Obanya, P. (2009). Dreaming, leaving and doing education. Ibadan: Education research and study group.
- Ocho, L.O. (2005). Basic resources needs for successful business management. In Nwangu I.O. Education and life issues and concerns. Enugu: Institute for Development Studies.
- Ojeifo, S.A. (2013). Entrepreneurship education in Nigeria: A panacea for youth unemployment. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 4 (6), 61 – 67.
- Solomon, G. (2007). An examination of entrepreneurship education in United States. *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development*, 14(2), 168 – 182.

The World Bank (2009). Youth employment: A major challenge for African countries. Accessed at <http://web.worldbank.org/WEBSITE/EXTERNAL/COUNTRIES/AFRICAEXT>