IMPACT OF ENTREPRENEURIAL EDUCATION ON ENTREPRENEURIAL INTENTION AMONG A SAMPLE OF NIGERIAN STUDENTS

ELIZABETH CHUKWUMA
Department of Entrepreneurship,
Faculty of Management & Social Sciences
Madonna University Nigeria,
Okija Campus, Anambra State, Nigeria
e-mail: lizziechukwuma@gmail.com
(Tel: +234 803 595 3623)

&

EGHEOSASE DAVIES OJEAGA OGBEIDE
Department of Psychology,
Faculty of Management & Social Sciences
Madonna University Nigeria,
Okija Campus, Anambra State, Nigeria
e-mail: daviesogbeide2010@yahoo.com
(Tel: +234 803 720 6631)

Abstract
While the number of entrepreneurship education programmes is growing, their impacts remain under-researched. Importantly, this study was designed to examine the impacts of entrepreneurial education on entrepreneurial intentions among a sample of undergraduates. Using a descriptive research design, data was collected from 166 participants. Analysis was done using inferential statistics (Chi square “X²”). Results revealed that students’ exposure to entrepreneurial education influences entrepreneurial intentions positively. That is intentions to become self-employed in the future was triggered as a result of inculcating entrepreneurial skills, and knowledge. The study findings were discussed in the context of the Functional Theory (which posits that entrepreneurial education is performing its function as a social component of the society); as well as the Theory of Planned Behavior (which argues that intentions are the best predictors of behavior). Its implication for developing entrepreneurial mindset in the Nigerian youths to foster economic development was also emphasized.

Introduction
The continuously expanding rates of unemployment has caused increasing global concern and particularly so in most developing countries, where the youths have been identified as the most affected groups. Concerted efforts have been on how to ameliorate this condition. Governments and Higher Education Institutions believe that entrepreneurship exerts a positive influence on job creation, reduction in graduate unemployment and poverty, growth in economic activities, as well as transformation in the informal sector. The European Commission for example, noted that the primary purpose of entrepreneurship education at higher levels of education aims to develop entrepreneurial capacities and mindsets (European Commission, 2008); and thus recommends integrating entrepreneurship training into university curricula.

The final report of the European Commission Expert Group for Entrepreneurship Education underlined the important role of education in promoting more entrepreneurial attitudes and behaviours (European Commission, 2008). In Nigeria, various governmental and non-governmental organizations have initiated policies through support agencies such as National Directorate for Employment (NDE), the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAEP), Small Medium Enterprises Development Agency (SMEDAN), National Office for Technology Acquisition and Promotion (NOTAP), Raw Materials & Development Council (RMRDC) to address the problems of unemployment among Nigerian citizens (Olayinka, 2010; Emmanuel, 2012; Akhuemonkhan, Raimi & Sofoluwe, 2013). Nigerian Government and Higher education institutions have demonstrated strong commitments to encourage undergraduates to embrace entrepreneurship. Public policy makers recognize the importance of entrepreneurship as a promoter of
economic development and hence support instruments like entrepreneurship education to increase entrepreneurial activity (Fayolle, Gailly, & Lassas-Clerc, 2006). These examples provide evidence of the widespread belief in the positive impact of entrepreneurship education.

By offering entrepreneurship education programmes, the initiators follow the principles of ‘conventional wisdom’ (Souitaris, Zerbinati, & Al-Laham, 2007) that to become an entrepreneur, the concerned individual needs to learn the "how" first. Research has, to date, contributed to this belief and underlined the positive impact of entrepreneurship education (Chrisman, 1997; Peterman & Kennedy, 2003; Zhao, Seibert, & Hills, 2005). Investment in entrepreneurship programmes is still on the increase (Gwynne, 2008); and the growth can be seen as indicative of widespread governmental belief in the positive impact that entrepreneurship can have on the socio-economic and political infrastructure of a nation (Matlay, 2008).

In 2004 for instance, the National Universities Commission (NUC), which is the regulatory body for university operations in Nigeria, mandated all universities in the Country to introduce a compulsory two-semester undergraduate level course on entrepreneurship. The goal was to stimulate and reinforce entrepreneurial mind-set among Nigerian undergraduates and to inculcate necessary entrepreneurship knowledge and skills, with the intention to reducing unemployment among fresh graduates in Nigeria (Ajao-Okorie and Adali, 2013). It is argued that the undergraduates, however, must first intend to become entrepreneurs before they can later realize such desire. This is in consonance with Ajzen’s (1991, 2005) theory of planned behavior which posits that intention is the best predictor of action or behaviour. Not being mindful of the possibility of unrealized intentions, it remains logical, safe and reasonable to first nurse an intention that will trigger the planning activity as necessary precursor to engaging in a line of business or entrepreneurial endeavour (Ekundayo & Babatunde, 2014).

Although it would appear that there is a strong belief that entrepreneurship education would influence entrepreneurial intention positively, especially in the context of increased effort investments, by the public and private sectors to promote entrepreneurial education, the bulk of existing literature have generally focused only on the perceived positive effects of the adoption of entrepreneurship courses in university curricular, to the seeming incognizance of whether a relationship really exists between students taking courses in entrepreneurial development study (EDS) and their intentions of becoming entrepreneurs. This study therefore seeks to close this identified research gap by examining the impact of entrepreneurial education on the prospects of entrepreneurship intentions among a sample of Nigerian Students.

Study Theories
The Functionalist Theory

The functional approach is an approach that can be used to explain the relationship between entrepreneurial education and entrepreneurial intentions. The functional theorists interpret each part of society in terms of how it contributes to the stability of the whole society. Society is visualized as more than the sum of its parts; with each part of society functioning for the stability of the whole. Society can be envisioned as an organism. Just like within an organism, each component plays a necessary part, and none can function alone. When one part experiences a crisis or fails, other parts must adapt to fill the void in some way.

Within functionalist theory, the different parts of society are primarily composed of social institutions, each of which is designed to fill different needs, and each of which has particular consequences for the form and shape of society. The theory emphasized education as one of the core institutions that helps in solving society need (unemployment). According to functionalism, an institution (for instance the educational institution) only exists because it serves a vital role in the functioning of society (e.g. provision of employment).

Society functions based upon the interdependent relationships that exist among the various social institutions (Perrin, 1976). Thus, the society is likened to the human body whereby each part functions for the continuous regulation of the whole. Any attempt to fully understand any part of the body organ must be done in relation to the other parts of the body; because they all function to contribute towards the
maintenance of the whole system. In the same vein, the various social institutions exist and persist based on the essential functions they perform in society (Ekundayo & Babatunde, 2014).

Therefore in societies, the government or state, provides education (entrepreneurial education) for the children of the society, which in turn interacts with other core institutions in the society to create jobs that reduce unemployment and poverty; and thus promote economic growth. The government is dependent upon this type of education to help students grow up to be self-employed so that they can support their own families. In the process, the individuals become income-earning taxpaying citizens, who in turn support the state.

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)

The social psychological perspective of Ajzen’s Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) proceeds with the assumption that many human behaviours are planned and hence are preceded by intention toward that behaviour (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2000). Unlike other models, TPB offers a closer and applicable framework that allows an understanding and more precise prediction of entrepreneurial intentions by focusing not only on personal but also on social factors (Krueger, Reily & Carsrud, 2000) like entrepreneurial education.

Entrepreneurship and Entrepreneurship Education

Entrepreneurship emerged as an important concept in global economic transformation, because studies have shown that entrepreneurship process is a vital source of developing human capital as well as providing learning opportunities for individuals to improve their skills, attitudes and abilities (Shane 2003; Brana 2008; Ekpo & Edet, 2011). It is also a general consensus among scholars that entrepreneurship is important in promoting and stimulating economic development and employment generation. Entrepreneurship has been viewed as the willingness and ability of an individual to seek for investment opportunities, to establish and to run an enterprise successfully (Suleiman, 2006 in Unachukwu, 2009). Nieman and Nieuwehuizen (2009) defined an entrepreneur as one who sees an opportunity in the marketplace mobilizes necessary resources, and grows a business venture to meet societal needs. A more generally acceptable definition states that entrepreneurship is the process of creating something new with value by devoting the necessary time and effort assuming the accompanying finance psychic and social risk, and reserving the resulting rewards of monetary and personal satisfaction and independence (Hirsch & Peters (2002).

Adiele (2010) defined entrepreneurship education as that form of education which inculcates into the individual learner, concepts, skills and knowledge on how to start a new business or create jobs. Education-derived knowledge (referred to as human capital) facilitates the integration and accumulation of new knowledge, providing individuals with a larger opportunity set (Gimeno, Folta, Corper & Wooc, 1997).

So far theory and research had proven that entrepreneurship education is clearly observed as a crucial social institution that seeks the establishment and maintenance of a functioning economy through job creation in order to curb high rate of unemployment. Entrepreneurship education is therefore regarded as a vital tool for the reduction of unemployment. The major concern of this study is to confirm or refute these findings within the Nigerian setting.

Empirical Review

It is believed that knowledge (and in particular education-derived knowledge) leads to more and better entrepreneurial opportunities. It is thus expected that specific knowledge about entrepreneurship learned during a programme would also improve the participants’ opportunity-identification ability and therefore raise their entrepreneurial intentions. Noel (2001) further argued that students who graduated in entrepreneurship reached higher scores in entrepreneurship intention and entrepreneurial self-efficacy than students who graduate in other disciplines.

Kumara (2012) found that students who have received entrepreneurial education often develop positive attitudes and beliefs towards self-employment and entrepreneurship intention to a large extent. 78% of students surveyed in Ireland who have passed through entrepreneurship education expressed interest in starting their own business in the future (Hannon, 2009).
Several studies relating to entrepreneurship education and self-employment intention have reported that there is a significant relationship between entrepreneurship education and self-employment intention (Unachukwu, 2009; Emmanuel, 2012; Ekpo & Edet, 2013).

Owusu-Ansah (2004) found out in a research conducted in Ghana that most people were motivated to a very large extent to start-up a business by virtue of their exposure to entrepreneurship trainings. Similarly in a study conducted by Wilson et al., (2007), it was revealed that entrepreneurship education serves a medium of increasing students’ interest in entrepreneurship career.

**Hypothesis**
There will be no significant relationship between Entrepreneurship Education and Entrepreneurial Intentions.

**Methods**

**Participants**
Of the 200 copies of the questionnaire administered on the participants, 166 useable copies were retrieved; representing 83% rate of return. This study was thus carried out among 166 students of Madonna University Nigeria comprising 73 males (representing 43.9% of the study sample) and 93 female students (representing 56.1% of the study sample). Participants’ ages ranged from 17 – 30 years with a mean age of 20.44 years. This study elicited information from students that have completed courses in entrepreneurial development study (EDS) as a compulsory course for two semesters. The 166 participants were selected from two faculties: faculty of management and social sciences; and faculty of Education.

Stratified sampling method was used to select the departments from the 2 faculties of the university after which simple random sampling was employed to select participants from the chosen departments. This helped in reducing errors of omission or bias in the selection process.

**Research Design**
A descriptive research design was adopted for this study. This method enabled explanations or descriptions of issues of focus in the research and to provide possible answers to the question “What number students would want to be self-employed after graduating?”

**Data Analysis**
For analyses of data inferential statistics in the form of chi-square ($X^2$) and degree of significance were employed to know the rate of students’ self-employment intention.

The formula for chi-square is shown below:

Chi-square ($X^2$)

Where $o = \text{observed frequency (the number of respondent to each category of variable).}$

$E = \text{expected frequency calculated through the use of the formula.}$

$$X^2 = \frac{\sum (o_i - e_i)^2}{e_i}$$

Where $o_i = \text{observed value}$

$e_i = \text{expected value}$

Degree of freedom = $(r-1) \times (c-1)$

Where $r$=number of rows and $c$ = number of columns
Results

Table 1 Demographic Characteristics of participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>43.97</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>56.03</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>166</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question: Do you agree that entrepreneurship education promotes entrepreneurship intentions?


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Entrepreneurship Education</th>
<th>Entrepreneurial Intention</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the result above, 102 out of the 166 respondents, representing 61% of the population, agree that entrepreneurship education promotes entrepreneurship intentions.

Chi square test of goodness of fit


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>No</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>X²</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>&gt;.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>83</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ X^2 = c = 4.25 > X^2 + (.05) t= 3.84 df = 1, n =166 \]

From the analyses above, the study revealed that there is a significant difference between entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurship; therefore the null hypothesis of the study was rejected since the critical value is higher than the table value.

Discussion

The study examined the impact of entrepreneurship education on entrepreneurship intentions. The overall finding of the study was that a strong positive relationship exists between students’ exposure to entrepreneurship education and intentions to go into self employment \( X^2 = c = 4.25 > X^2 + (.05) t= 3.84 \) df = 1, n =166. This outcome is in line with the findings of the study conducted by Jose (2013) on the impact of entrepreneurship Education on entrepreneurial competences and intentions. The study alluded to a positive impact of entrepreneurial training on not only entrepreneurial intentions but also on competencies needed for entrepreneurial successes.

The current study therefore affirms that the provision of entrepreneurship education to Madonna University students is capable of impacting them with requisite skills and knowledge necessary to stimulate and sustain the intention to become self employed.

Conclusion

The findings of this study revealed that Madonna students expressed certain entrepreneurial intentions due to their exposure to entrepreneurship education. The result of the study suggested that entrepreneurial education training received may serve as an entrepreneurial tool for inculcating appropriate skills and
attitude needed to inspire self-employment ideations, foster job creation, and thus provoke economic growth.

To this extent it is believed that the finding of this study has provided some reasonable level of justification to more stridently encourage the inculcation of entrepreneurial education in students of not just universities, but also, at other rungs of education (like the secondary level). It is the opinion of the researchers of current study that the outcome of this work would serve immense utility for the stimulation of entrepreneurship intentions among university undergraduates in Nigeria. Consequently, it is expected that critical stakeholders and sundry relevant authorities and policy makers in the Nation’s educational system, will leverage the inherent insights of this study to provoke the necessary behavioral and attitudinal disposition among Nigeria youths for a more desirable socio-economic and socio-political climate.

**Recommendations**

Since knowledge (and in particular education-derived knowledge) leads to more and better entrepreneurial opportunities, it is suggested that specific knowledge about entrepreneurship learned during a programme would also improve the participants’ opportunity-identification ability and therefore raise their entrepreneurial intentions. Particularly, entrepreneurship education has been considered one of the key instruments to increase the entrepreneurial attitudes of both potential and nascent entrepreneurs (Francisco, Juan & Jose, 2011).

Moreover, it has been argued that an entrepreneurship educational programme could contribute to the development of competences related to entrepreneurship, social and civic skills, and cultural awareness. According to Basu and Virik (2006), the prior contact to entrepreneurship education has a certain impact on students’ attitudes toward entrepreneurship and intention to choose same as future vocation. Moreover, Basu and Virik (2006) also pointed out the connection of exposure to education and perceived behavioral control on entrepreneurial self-efficacy, the main factor that affects the formation of individual intention. In a research by Mai and Anh (2013), on the influence of the content of undergraduate programs on entrepreneurship, it is found that the training program in entrepreneurship at undergraduate and postgraduate stages was important to raise entrepreneurial awareness and intentions.

**Study Limitations**

The conclusion of a study like this would not be complete without a mention of some of its limitations, one of which is the small sample size used for the study; caution should thus be exercised while making generalizations and extrapolations from the study outcome. Future research could explore and incorporate more number of participants, and even extend same to the secondary school level.

Also, the study was of cross-sectional design. This extensively makes the study prone to common method variance. Again the Study sample was sourced from a Private Faith-Based University in the South-East geo-political zone to the seeming exclusion of Public universities; and from other zones of the Country with own peculiarities of culture and creed.

Further research should also try to explore constructs like entrepreneurial self efficacy which had been implicated in research as a vital construct that influences the development of entrepreneurial intentions.
References


