



DOES ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION AFFECT ENTREPRENEURIAL CAREER INTENTION AND PREFERENCE FOR SELF VERSUS WAGE EMPLOYMENT AMONG POLYTECHNIC STUDENTS?

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the influence of Entrepreneurship Education (EE) on Entrepreneurial Career Intention and Preference for self employment against wage employment among Polytechnic students in Idah, Kogi State – Nigeria. Data were collected from random sample of 240 HND and ND students, comprising of 120 females and 120 males within the age range of 19 years and 29 years, with a mean age of 22.4 years (S.D=2.17). A structured questionnaire was developed as tool to collect data which was analysed using t-test and chi-square statistical analysis. Result revealed that there was a significant difference in Entrepreneurial Intention (EI) of final year HND students that have been exposed to EE compared to year one ND students that were not exposed to EE ($t = 7.07$; $df = 208$; $p < .05$). Also, final year HND students that were exposed to EE have significantly higher mean score on EI (17.53) compare to first year ND students that were not exposed to EE (14.58). In addition, result shows that final year HND students that have been exposed to EE significantly differ in preference for self employment against wage employment than the first year ND students that have not been exposed to EE ($X^2 = 43.31$, $df = 1$; $p < .05$). It was concluded that EE is an imperative and that Nigerian government should embark on a massive programme on integrated entrepreneurship development by establishing state-level centre for entrepreneurship programmes.

Keywords: *Entrepreneurship Education, Intention, Preference, Self Employment.*

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria has taken many steps to strengthen its education sector and address the high rate of unemployment among University and Polytechnic graduates in the country. In this direction, entrepreneurship has captured the attention of policy makers and academics. It is opined that entrepreneurial engagement is the 21st century strategy for economic growth and development of any nation (Afolabi, 2015; Sule, 2015; Akpan, et al 2012). In this regard, Vice Chancellors, Rectors and Provosts of Nigerian higher educational institutions as at early 2000s identified the importance of introducing Entrepreneurship Education (EE) into their educational programme curricula. The Federal Government therefore, directed all tertiary education regulatory agencies (like NUC, NBTE & NCCE) to establish necessary modalities 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 business and to consider self employment as a viable career option. As a result entrepreneurship education becomes mandatory at the tertiary level. And also, Entrepreneurship Development Centres (EDCs) which has the objectives of teaching and gingering students of tertiary institutions to acquire entrepreneurial innovative and management skills were established across the nation's institutions of higher learning. All these efforts were to encourage graduates to be self employed, create job opportunities for others and generates wealth (Okechukwu, 2017). However, decades after this policy implementation many Nigerian graduates still face the problem of chronic unemployment and unrestrained job seeking as opposed to job creation (Frens, et al 2017).

Entrepreneurship Education (EE) according to Isaac, et al (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 start up new ventures (Postigo and Tomborimi, 2002). According to Basse 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. Thus, it is a re-orientation from job seekers to job creators.

The central variable in this study, Entrepreneurial Intention (EI) will be defined as one's judgment about the likelihood of owning one's own business. EI which also refers to the extent at which an individual is interested at becoming an entrepreneur under different conditions has received extensive investigation by researchers in diverse fields and from different perspectives (Nabi & Holden, 2008; Gerba, 2012; Omuvwie, 2013; Malebana & Swanepoel, 2015). These perspectives include self efficacy, personality traits, culture, age, family status, education and training, creative potential, need for achievement etc (Frank et al., 2005; Hamidi, et al 2008). Intentions have been viewed from both psychological and entrepreneurial viewpoint as a key influencer of the decision to engage in any activity including becoming an entrepreneur (Armitage & Conner 2001). Hence, using his theory of planned behaviour, Azjen (1991) concludes that "a person's beliefs and attitudes regarding a particular behaviour inform their intention to perform that behaviour in the future. For instance, every entrepreneur first had the intention to start and own a business before they eventually started, and intentions have motivating factors.

On the one hand, wage (salaried) employment is the kind of employment in which one is engaged to work on a salary in a particular organization, which may be private or public. And on the other hand, self-employment is viewed as a lifetime engagement in or belonging to the private sector as an entrepreneur (Emmanuel, 2011). However, it takes some time to make up one's mind whether to be self-employed or be an employee and still depends largely on one's intent.

The question of what influence graduates entrepreneurial pursuits as a career path and investigating the role EE plays in graduate entrepreneurial intentions, behaviour and engagement is attracting increased interest among academics and allied professionals (Izedonmi & Okafor, 2010; Koe, et al 2012). Researchers have focused on the study of EE as the major influencer of EI, because it is construed as an effective strategy in providing individuals with the ability to recognize commercial opportunities and the knowledge, skillsets and attitudes to engage in entrepreneurial activities (Fens, 2016; Fens, et al 2016).

In a similar vein, many researchers have continued to prove, through their findings that there is a positive relationship between EE and students' EI (Obisanya, 2010, Bassey & Olu, 2008; Sautitaris, et al 2007;

Wilson, et al 2007; Owusu-Ansah, 2004; Varela & Jimenez, 2001). However, most of the researches have focused on University students and on developed economies and less on under developed economies especially Nigeria (Gerald, 2006; Christine, 2004; Lie, 2004 & Christian, 2000). Also, literature revealed that there is a scanty research on the effectiveness of EE and how it influence students EI in Nigeria Polytechnics. The present study therefore addresses this significant research gaps. Thus, this study aimed at assessing the impact of EE on entrepreneurial career intention and preference for self versus wage employment among Nigeria Polytechnic students focusing on Federal Polytechnic, Idah, Kogi State. This lead to the following research question;

- i. Does exposure to EE have significant impact on Polytechnic students' EI and preference for self employment against wage employment?

Against this background, the following hypotheses were formulated:

- i. There will be a statistically significant difference in EI of HND final year students that were exposed to EE compare to ND first year students that were not exposed to EE.
- ii. HND final year students that were exposed to EE will have significantly higher mean score on EI compare to ND first year students that were not exposed to EE.
- iii. HND final year students that were exposed to EE will significantly differ in preference for self employment against wage employment than the ND first year students that were not exposed to EE.

In sum, the objectives of this study are to determine the differences in EI due to exposure to EE in a sample of first year and final year students of Federal Polytechnic in Idah. And also, to examine the influence of EE on students' preference for self employment against wage employment in the sample.

METHOD

Design

Causal-comparative research design used for conducting ex-post factor research was adopted for the study. This is because the researcher tries to have a comparative group (which has not been exposed to the presumed independent variable) along with the experimental group (which has been exposed to independent variable) to establish a causal link between the Independent variable and Dependent variable. Entrepreneurial Intention

constituted the dependent variable while Entrepreneurial Education was the independent variable.

Subjects

The participants in this study were both first year and final year students who were drawn from three selected departments viz; Accountancy, Business Administration and Marketing from the School of Business Studies of Federal Polytechnic, Idah. Out of this population, a sample of two hundred and forty (240) students were randomly selected comprising of 120 ND (first-year) students (60 males and 60 females) and 120 HND (final-year) students (60 males and 60 females) across the three departments. Age range of the respondents was between 19 and 29 years (Mean = 22.4 years, SD = 2.17). Fifty percent (50%) of the respondents (i.e. first-year ND students) were never exposed to EE, while the other 50% (i.e. final-year HND students) have been exposed to EE – offered courses (theory and practical) on EE.

Instrument

An entrepreneurial Career Intention Questionnaire (ECIQ) was developed for this study. Parts of the questionnaire tap demographic information including age, level of study, gender, EE training etc. Another part, tap information meant to measure students' entrepreneurial intention. Response choices on this was prepared in 5 – point likert scale format ranging from strongly disagree (SD) to strongly agree (SA). These were assigned scale value of 1 = SD, 2 = D, 3 = UD, 4 = A and 5 = SA. The last part of the questionnaire tap information on students' preference for self and wage (salaried) employment with a YES or NO dichotomized response option. The instrument used in this study had a reliability coefficient of 0.70. With data analysis using cronbach coefficient alpha method of internal consistency correlational analysis, all the items on ECIQ had minimum factor loading of 0.40.

Procedure

In this study, 240 copies of questionnaire (ECIQ) were administered to the respondents in their classes during school hours. The researcher also explained the instructions on the questionnaire to the students. All the questionnaires were correctly filled and returned. Respondents' participation was voluntary and their anonymity was ensured. Upon return, all filled questionnaires were collated, scored and subjected to statistical analysis using t-test and chi-square.

RESULTS

From the analysis of the data collected and the testing of the hypotheses, the following results were obtained. There was a significant difference in EI of final year HND students that have been exposed to EE compared to year one ND students that were not exposed to EE ($t = 7.07$; $df = 208$; $p < .05$). This result confirmed hypothesis 1 which stated that there will be a significant difference in Entrepreneurial Intention (EI) of final year students that were exposed to Entrepreneurial Education (EE) compared to ND first year students that were not exposed to EE. Also, final year HND students that were exposed to EE have significantly higher mean scores on EI (17.53) compare to year one ND students that were not exposed to EE (14.58). Meaning that hypothesis 2 which stated that HND final year students that were exposed to EE will have significantly higher mean score on EI compare to ND first-year students that were not exposed to EE was confirmed as stated in table 1;

Table 1: Mean scores for final-year and first year students on Entrepreneurial Intention

LEVEL OF VARIABLE	NOS OF CASES	MEAN SCORE
Final year (HND)	120	17.53
First year (ND)	120	14.58
Total	240	

From Table 1, HND final year students had a higher mean score (17.53) than ND first-year students (14.58) on entrepreneurial intention. The chi-square result in Table 2 for hypothesis 3 shows significant influence of EE on students' preference for self employment against wage employment ($X^2 = 43.31$; $df = 1$; $P < .05$). Thus, the hypothesis which stated that HND final year students that were exposed to EE will significantly differ in preference for self employment against wage employment than ND first year student that were not exposed to EE was confirmed.

Table 2: Summary table of Chi-square Test showing the influence of EE on preference for self employment and wage employment

Source	Observed Frequency	Expected Frequency	X ²	df	P
HND Self Employment	105	60	43.31	1	<.05
HND Wage Employment	15	60			
ND Self Employment	55	60			
ND Wage Employment	65	60			

DISCUSSION

The findings from this study shows that there was a significant difference in EI of students that were exposed to EE and those that were not exposed to EE. And that students exposed to EE have significantly higher mean score on EI compare to students that were not exposed to EE (HND final year students = 17.53 while ND first year students = 14.58). These findings have support in earlier research works that found a positive relationship between EE and students' EI (Uduak & Aniefick, 2011; Bassey & Olu, 2008; Wilson, et al 2007; Soutaris, et al 2007; Owusu – Ansah, 2004; Varela & Jimenez, 2001). The differences in EI of sampled students due to exposure to EE evidently indicated the key role of EE in the development of entrepreneurial career intention as confirmed in this study.

On the other hand, the result also shows that students that were exposed to EE significantly differ in their preference for self employment against wage employment than students that were not exposed to EE. This singular finding also has support in earlier researches (e.g. Obisanya, 2010; Owusu-Ansah, 2004; European Union, 2002; & Egunsola, et al 2012). This confirms that exposure to EE significantly influences students' preference for self employment against wage employment. However, the result suggest plausible linkage between EI and students employment preference; meaning that whether students would be officers or entrepreneurs after graduation would be determine by their intent. More specifically, in this study out of 120 HND respondents, 54.4% expressed entrepreneurial career intention and (105) 87.5% indicated preference for self-employment while out of 120 ND respondents 45.6% expressed entrepreneurial career intention and (55) 45.8% indicated preference for self-employment.

CONCLUSION

The present study suggests that exposure to EE provides requisite knowledge and inspiration for entrepreneurship with implications for development of intention to perform entrepreneurial behaviours and the possibility of choosing an entrepreneurial career after graduation. Thus, EE is an imperative that could tackle the problems of graduate unemployment through the viable option of self-employment. More importantly, Nigerian government should embark on a massive programme on integrated entrepreneurship development by establishing state-level centre for entrepreneurship development/programmes.

Finally, there is the need for redefining the goals (objectives) of EE and device the most effective procedure for achieving such identified objectives. This is the ultimate measure of success of the EE. Typically, are the objectives to provide understanding of what entrepreneurship is all about, to equip individuals with entrepreneurial skills, to prepare individuals to act as entrepreneurs, to vocationalize Nigerian educational system by the inclusion of EE as a catch-them-young approach, to institutionalize entrepreneurship education and training to track success of EE and develop follow-up further training programme for graduate on how to practicalize EE, to assess the effectiveness of EE in developing "need for achievement" among the entrepreneur, or possibly to change students' perception toward graduate self employment using experience gained in many developed economies as reference model of entrepreneurship development.

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