

RELEVANCE OF ENTREPRENEURIAL STUDIES AS PERCEIVED BY VOCATIONAL EDUCATION UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT: *This study investigated the perception of undergraduate vocational education students on the relevancy of entrepreneurial Studies in Ekiti state. In order to elicit information required for this study, three research questions were developed and answered while two null hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance. A 17 item structured questionnaire titled vocational education students' entrepreneurial studies perception (VESESP) was developed for data collection. Survey research design was adopted for the study. The sample for the study was 84 respondents made up of 97 male and 49 female vocational educational students in the two institutions running vocational education programs in Ekiti state. Face and content validity were carried out on the structured questionnaire by two experts in vocational and technical and education. The Cronbach alpha method was used to compute the reliability of the questionnaire to obtain a co-efficient of 0.79. Mean and standard deviation were used to analyse the research questions while t-test statistics and ANOVA were used to test the hypothesis. Based on the data collected and analysed, it was discovered that majority of respondent view entrepreneurship education as desirable and that entrepreneurship education prepares students very well for future entrepreneurial careers, there were also no significant differences among students running various degree programmes among other findings. However, it was also observed that there are various challenges facing entrepreneurship education as perceived by the students, this includes; students not having the opportunity to interact with high level entrepreneurs, inability of students to be able to prepare business plan after attending entrepreneurship education classes among others. Recommendations were thereafter made on ways to improve on entrepreneurship education courses in order to achieve the desired objectives of making vocational and technical education graduates to be job creator rather than job seekers.*

KEYWORDS: Entrepreneurship Education, Vocational Education, Undergraduate Students, perception.

INTRODUCTION

Contemporaneously, the term Vocational and Technical education (VTE) is used to mean education geared towards skill acquisition for gainful employment. It is a type of education that is meant to produce semi-skilled, skilled and technical manpower necessary to restore, revitalize, energize, operate and sustain the national economy and substantially reduce unemployment (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2000). It is a form of education involving, in addition to general education, the study of technologies and related sciences and the acquisition of practical skills,

attitudes, understanding and knowledge relating to occupations in various sectors of economic and social life (FGN, 2004).

This specialized education is offered in institutions saddled with training of lower and middle level manpower, including technical colleges, Polytechnics and Universities where the objectives is the production of teachers to teach in some of these other levels in addition to acquiring the requisite skills needed in world of work. Some of the VTE programmes offered at the undergraduate level in Nigerian universities include Agricultural education, business education, fine and applied education, home economics education and technical education. Despite the acquisition of relevant saleable skills needed at the 21 century work place, students undergoing these various VTE programmes after graduation like many other graduates still face the challenges of unemployment due to lack of work experience, low skill base, economic depression and entrepreneurial inexperience.

Nigeria formal labour market is currently saturated, unable to absorb the ever increasing number of labour force. It is becoming more difficult for graduates to find employment in the formal sector and this call for the graduates to use their skills and education to create employment opportunities through entrepreneurship. This will only be possible when the graduates are well equipped with entrepreneurial skills during their years of learning. It is evident that levels of entrepreneurship are still not improving in the country. There has been an upward trend in the number of young people entering higher institution. The daunting observation is that while the graduate labour force is on the rise, a large number of degree holders are finding it difficult to find employment. Nigeria is said to have one of the highest rates of youth unemployment in the unindustrialized world. Despite strong economic growth, youth's full-time unemployment rate for 2015 in Nigeria was put at astonishing rate of 9.9% (National Bureau of Statistics, Nigeria, 2015). On the other hand countries like Japan, China, India, Korea, have joined community of industrialized nations by strengthening their small scale industries. Nigeria is yet to understand the relevance of this sub-sector. To this therefore entrepreneurship is offered in all universities in Nigeria as entrepreneurship education, entrepreneurial education or entrepreneurship studies as part of the curriculum this in other to put Nigeria back into the right track.

Entrepreneurship education is a lifelong learning process, starting as early as elementary school and progressing through all levels of education, including university education experiences that will enable them to develop the insight needed to discover and create entrepreneurial opportunities and the expertise to successfully start and manage their own businesses. It can therefore be regarded as the type of education used to deliver entrepreneurial knowledge, skills and abilities to the students for helping them to succeed in their future career as an entrepreneur.

Entrepreneurship education trains the student to gain innovative enterprise skills and capture the opportunities to success in business venture. Bechard and Toulouse (1998) define entrepreneurship education as a teaching process that provide information, training and educates anyone that interest in entrepreneurial activities (cited by Jones & English, 2004 from Bechard & Toulouse, 1998)

On this same vein, Alberti, Sciascia & Poli, (2004) describe Entrepreneurship education as a structured formal conveyance of entrepreneurial competencies, which includes concepts, skills

and mental awareness utilised by individuals in the start-up process and growth stages in their ventures". It entails entrepreneurial individuals interacting with their environment, thus discovering, evaluating and exploiting opportunities

Accordingly, Mentoor and Friedrich (2007) opined that entrepreneurship education serves three objectives. Firstly, to increase the understanding among students about what entrepreneurship entails. Entrepreneurial education is very important and necessary for all segments of society. Secondly, it is about preparing individuals for the world of work. It implies teaching students on how to become entrepreneurial, take responsibility about their careers and personal lives.

Thus Entrepreneurship education can be regarded as the purposeful intervention by the educator in the life of the learner to impart entrepreneurial qualities and skills to ensure that the learner is able to survive in the business world. On this same vein Paul (2005) asserts that Entrepreneurial education is structured to achieve the following objectives;

1. To offer functional education for the youth that will enable them to be self-employed and self reliant.
2. Provide the youth graduates with adequate training that will enable them to be creative and innovative in identifying novel business opportunities.
3. To serve as a catalyst for economic growth and development.
4. Offer tertiary institution graduates with adequate training in risk management, to make certain bearing feasible.
5. To reduce high rule of poverty.
6. Create employment generation.
7. Reduction in rural – urban migration.
8. Provide the young graduates with enough training and support that will enable them to establish a career in small and medium sized businesses.
9. To inculcate the spirit of perseverance in the youths and adults which will enable them to persist in any business venture they embark on.
10. Create smooth transition from traditional to a modern industrial economy.

Entrepreneurship Education is not just about teaching someone to run a business. It is all about encouraging creative thinking and promoting a strong sense of self-work and accountability. Through entrepreneurship education, students learn how to create a business and lots more. In this same vein Jimah & Unuigbokhai (2011) sees Entrepreneurship education as seeking to prepare people, especially youths, to be responsible, enterprising individuals who become entrepreneurs or entrepreneurial thinkers and who contribute to economic development and sustainable communities. It is thus that type of education that enabled individual student to sell his or her major course of study, skills and or talents to the public, thus making the recipient self employed, competent and having positive perception about entrepreneur.

Perception is a process of being aware of one's environment through the senses. How one perceives the world consequently determines how one reacts to it. Perception involves analyzing and interpreting items picked out by the senses in order to assign meaning to them. How one analyzes and interprets a sensory reception is determined by many factors which include cultural setting, memories, values, imaginations and past experiences. As such, different people will

perceive the same object differently because the content and degree of these influences is different. Consequently perception is not external reality. Perception is the way a particular person thinks about the reality; it is a subjective reality (Lindsay & Norman, 1977) Perception plays a critical role in entrepreneurship. If a person has a positive perception towards entrepreneurship it is likely that the person will engage in an entrepreneurial act (GEM, 2010). regardless of gender.

The role of gender in economic development processes as observed by Beneria (2003) has been increasingly recognized as crucial, both in terms of the potential for success and in the nature of the impact of particular development strategies and programmes. Haiyang & Volpe (2002) conducted a survey of financial literacy among college students in the USA. Their findings show that women generally have less knowledge about personal finance topics. The same study revealed that gender differences remain statistically significant after controlling for other factors such as participants' majors, class rank, work experience, and age. The authors, however, found that education and experience can have a significant impact on the financial literacy of both men and women. They observed further that women generally have less enthusiasm and the willingness to learn about personal finance topics than men do.

It is thus expedient therefore not only to ascertain vocational education students' perception as to the relevance of entrepreneurship education but also to determine this perspective based on gender.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to ascertain the perception of VTE students as to the relevance of entrepreneurial studies

Specifically, the study sought to

1. ascertain the perception of VTE students as to the relevance of entrepreneurial studies to stimulate student interest towards entrepreneur
2. ascertain the perception of VTE students as to the relevance of entrepreneurial knowledge gained from entrepreneurial studies
3. ascertain the perception of VTE students as to the relevance of practical application of entrepreneurial skills gained from entrepreneurial studies

Statement of the Problem

Several graduates from Nigerian Universities today are not gainfully employed. Nigeria is said to have one of the highest rates of youth unemployment age (15-34) in the unindustrialized world. Despite strong economic growth, youth's full-time unemployment rate in Nigeria was put at 50% while countries like Japan, China, India, Korea, have joined community of industrialized nations by strengthening their small scale industries. Nigeria is yet to understand the relevance of this sub-sector. The Nigeria National Bureau of Statistics (2016) announced that the country's labour statistics report put the total Nigeria unemployment rate at 10.4 percent. This report state that about 22.4m Nigerians are technically unemployed. (Inclusive of unemployed and under employed) Nigeria unemployment according to the report thus represents about 14 per cent of global unemployment.

Limitations of the Study

The study was primarily focused only on the expressions and views from current 200 level undergraduate VTE university students and above who are studying in Ekiti State institutions. The students were assumed to possess high potential with regard to entrepreneurship due to their exposure to entrepreneurial classes and activities

Research Questions

1. What are the perceptions of VTE student on the creation of interest in entrepreneurial activities as a result of their entrepreneurial studies?
2. What are the perceptions of VTE student on the relevance of entrepreneurial cognitive knowledge gained from entrepreneurial studies?
3. What are the perceptions of VTE student on the relevance of practical entrepreneurial skills gained from entrepreneurial studies?

Hypotheses

HO₁ There is no significant difference in the mean perception of vocational and technical Education Students based on gender as to the relevance of entrepreneurship education

HO₂ There is no significant difference in the mean perception of agriculture education, Business education, Home economics education and Technical Education VTE students as to the relevance of entrepreneurship education to their studies(vocation)

METHODOLOGY

A descriptive Survey design was used for the study. The study was carried out in the two tertiary institutions running VTE degree programmes in Ekiti State. The institutions are Ekiti State University, Ado Ekiti and University of Nigeria(Ikere Ekiti campus) The population consists of all 1710 Vocational and Technical Education students that comprise agriculture education, Business education, Home economics education and Technical Education. The samples consist of 85 VTE students purposively drawn from the population in the above mentioned institutions. The instrument used for data collection was a 17 item structured questionnaire tagged vocational education students' entrepreneurial studies perception (VESESP). The VESESP was a 4 point rating scale of Strongly Agree (SA); Agree (A); Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD) developed by the researcher. The questionnaire was divided into two sections, A and B. Section A sought information on personal data of the VTE students. Section B sought information on relevance of entrepreneurial studies as perceived by the students. The questionnaire was validated by three vocational and technical educators, two from Ekiti state University, Ado Ekiti and one from College of Education, Ikere Ekiti, all in Ekiti State. The comments and suggestions of the experts were incorporated in building up the final draft of the instrument. The instrument was trial-tested on 20 vocational and technical Education students drawn from Tai solarin University, Ijebu ode, Ogun state, an institution not involved in the main study. The result was used to determine the reliability of the instrument using Cronbach Alpha techniques. A reliability index of 0.79 was estimated. This value was considered high enough, thus indicating that the instrument was adequate and reliable for the study. The questionnaires were administered to the respondents

with the help of two research assistants. The questionnaires were retrieved on the spot thereby ensuring 100% return. The research questions were answered using mean and standard deviation. A questionnaire comprising of seventeen items with mean rating of 2.50 and above on the four-point scale was accepted and thus indicated that the respondents agreed with the item on the questionnaire while a mean of 2.49 and below indicated that the respondents disagreed with the item on the questionnaire. The 2.50 cut off point were derived from the sum of nominal values assigned to the scaling items responded to by the respondents divided by number of respondents (N) that responded to the items. The null hypotheses were tested using t-test and ANOVA statistics at $p < 0.05$.

RESULTS

The result of the research questions and hypothesis were presented below

Research Question 1

Table 1: Mean response of the respondents on their perceptions as to the stimulation of interest in entrepreneurial activities by entrepreneurial studies

S/N	ENTREPRENEURIAL INTEREST ITEMS	\bar{X}	SD	Decision
1	Majority of students including myself consider entrepreneurship education classes very desirable	3.59	1.35	Agree
2	many students engage themselves stylishly with other activities during entrepreneurship education classes	2.35	1.47	Disagree
3	Students interest to pursue entrepreneurship ventures in the university are aroused through the entrepreneurial Unit	3.75	1.37	Agree
4	My entrepreneurial lecturers helped and encourage me to meet people with good ideas for new ventures.	2.06	1.40	Disagree
5	I consider entrepreneurship class as an ideal place to learn about how to start a business	3.34	1.46	Agree
6	My entrepreneurial studies lecturers stimulate my interest in entrepreneurship formally and informally	3.60	1.43	Agree

Key.

\bar{X} = Mean

SD = Standard Deviation

From table 1, the mean ratings of items 1, 3, 5 and 6 of respondents were above the cut-off point of 2.50, thus the respondents agreed that all those interest related items were being practiced in the universities. However, items 2 and 4 were identified as untrue by the respondents and does not represent the reality in their various institutions, thus they have mean cut off point less than 2.50 which is the acceptance mean score.

Table 2: Mean response of the respondents on their perceptions as to the relevance of entrepreneurial cognitive knowledge gained as a result of their exposure to entrepreneurial studies?

S/N	ENTREPRENEURIAL KNOWLEDGE	\bar{X}	SD	Decision
1	Practical examples of entrepreneurship were included in classroom teaching.	3.95	1.21	Agree
2	I now understand the importance of entrepreneurship through entrepreneurship lectures	2.54	1.58	Agree
3	My university's entrepreneurship courses prepares students very well for future entrepreneurial careers	3.65	1.25	Agree
4	The university provides resources & support to assist student entrepreneurs through provision of resource books and materials by entrepreneur unit	3.50	1.14	Agree
5	The enabling and creative environment that exist in the university created by entrepreneurial studies stimulates me to develop ideas for new ventures	3.20	1.23	Agree
6	There are student organisations on the university campus that promote entrepreneurship.	2.43	1.40	Disagree

Key

N = No of the respondents.

\bar{X} = Mean

SD = Standard Deviation

From table 2, the mean ratings of items 1, 3, 4 and 5 of respondents were above the cut-off point of 2.50, thus the respondents agreed that all those interest related items are being practice in the universities. However items 2 and 6 were seen as not applicable toothier situation by the respondents and does not represent the reality in their various institutions, thus they have mean cut off point less than 2.50

Table 3: Mean response of the respondents as to their perceptions on the relevance of practical entrepreneurial skills gained as a result of their exposure to entrepreneurial studies

S/N	ENTREPRENEURIAL SKILLS	\bar{X}	SD	Decision
1	I was able to develop entrepreneurial knowledge, skills and competencies through entrepreneurship courses that I attended.	3.23	1.48	Agree
2	As a result of taking subjects on entrepreneurship, I have better understanding about business	2.40	1.27	Disagree
3	Through entrepreneurship lectures, I have learnt how to prepare a business plan	2.28	0.62	Disagree
4	Through entrepreneurship lectures, I have learnt to approach banks and financial institutions for financial support.	2.31	1.05	Disagree
5	Through entrepreneurship lectures I have learnt how to register a patent and register a business	2.16	0.85	Disagree
6	As a result of exposure to entrepreneurial classes and activities many students including myself are considering starting a business of our own	2.60	1.53	Agree
7	Through exposure to entrepreneurial classes and activities I have been able to start a business of my own	2.31	1.18	Disagree

Key*N* = No of the respondents. \bar{X} = Mean*SD* = Standard Deviation

From table 3, the mean ratings of items 1 and 6 of respondents were above the mean cut-off point of 2.50, thus the respondents agreed that all the skill related items were being practice in the universities. However items 2,3 4,5 and 7 were identified as not applicable to their situation by the respondents and does not represent the reality in their various institutions, thus they have mean cut off point less than 2.50

Hypothesis 1

Table 4: t-test Analysis of the mean responses of male and female VTE undergraduate students as to their perception on the relevance of entrepreneurship education

Group	N	\bar{X}	SD	Df	t-cal	t-crit	P < 0.05
Male Students	26	2.89	0.70	83	0.888	1.96	Not significant
Female Students	59	2.83	0.74				

Key \bar{X} = Mean*SD* = Stand Deviation*N* = Number of respondent*Df* = Degree of freedom

Table 3 showed that t-calculated is 0.888 as against t-critical which is 1.96. Therefore, the null hypothesis of no significant difference is not rejected. There is no statistically significant difference between the mean response of male and female VTE students on their perception as to the relevance of entrepreneurship education.

Hypothesis 2

Table 4: Analysis Of Variance (ANOVA) on the mean responses of agriculture education, Business education, Home economics education and Technical Education VTE students as to their perception on the relevance of entrepreneurship education

ANOVA

Sources of variance	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	25.874	33	.784	.729	.832
Within Groups	54.879	51	1.076		
Total	80.753	84			

The F critical (2.610) is greater than the calculated F (0.729) at 0.05 level of significance. Thus the null hypothesis is accepted. This implies that there were no differences in the response of agriculture education, Business education, Home economics education and Technical Education VTE students as to their perception on the relevance of entrepreneurship education

DISCUSSION

The results indicated that many students engage themselves stylishly with other activities during entrepreneurship education classes it also observed that university students are not encouraged to pursue entrepreneurship ventures in the university and that lecturers are not helping students to meet people with good ideas for new ventures. This perceived short coming can be attributed to the teaching method being used to teach entrepreneurship education in the institutions. The finding is line with the study of Mwasalwiba (2010) who points out that the two primary teaching methods for entrepreneurship are the traditional (passive) method and the innovative (active) method and that the traditional method consists of lectures while the innovative method is more action based. Mwasalwiba (2010) stated further that entrepreneurship knowledge and skills cannot be gained through traditional teaching methods. Only the interactive teaching methods are able to develop these knowledge and skills. Leadership cannot be learned by reading from books or writing exam but only through real time practical in business activities and other interactive methods (Klein, 2006). Thus universities need to increase the innovative teaching methods in order to teach their students about entrepreneurship knowledge and skills effectively. Corroborating the above assertion Teh, Rosni & Md (2014) opined that The effectiveness of entrepreneurship programs is determined by its strong influence to involve in entrepreneurs activities. To this therefore, universities need to organized more entrepreneurship activities to influence the students to involve in business activities. Through the exposure in business activities, the students will be influenced and motivated to engage more in entrepreneurship education.

Most of the respondents agreed that Practical examples of entrepreneurship were included in classroom teaching. They are also of the opinion that entrepreneurship course prepares students for entrepreneurship careers. The respondents also agreed that their universities provide resources & support to assist student entrepreneurs through provision of resource books and materials by the entrepreneur units. It was again observed that the students knows the importance of entrepreneurship through entrepreneurship lectures they took

The study indicated that the students were able to develop entrepreneurial knowledge, skills and competencies through entrepreneurship courses that they took. It is also not out of tune that the students considered starting businesses of their own as a result of exposure to entrepreneurial classes and activities. These findings is in consonance with the work of Tulgan (1999) who earlier reported that entrepreneurship education at the university level prepares students to acquire a variety of skills that can make them to be responsible, enterprising individuals by engaging themselves in real life learning experiences where they can take risk, manage the results and learn from the outcomes. However, in the research finding by Uche *et al.* (2009) university students were found to lack entrepreneurial skills. This could be attributed to the fact that students were taught theoretical knowledge without entrepreneurial skills.

However, the results suggest that students are relatively weak in the area of approaching commercial banks and other financial institutions for support. According to Phelan and Sharpley (2007), there are certain skills and competencies that are needed for the development of a career in entrepreneurship. He argued that ability to assess fund is one of the veritable skill

The results suggest that entrepreneurship education is also ineffective in encouraging students to prepare a business plan. It also seems ineffective in neither helping students to meet people with good business ideas nor motivating students to start a business of their own. This finding is in agreement with the work of Nwosu and Ohia (2009) who identified in their study curriculum content which is not practical-oriented and insufficient finance as challenges of entrepreneurship education in Nigerian universities. Inyang and Enuoh (2009) find that entrepreneurial competencies are necessary for the development and survival of business ventures.

The study also indicated that male and female VTE students do not differ significantly in their mean ratings of the relevance of entrepreneurship education. This means that gender is not a major factor in determining VTE students' sense of judgment. Thus, if male and female VTE students are alike in many respects and if both of them learn the same thing, they are likely to perceive learnt habits the same way. The finding is at variance with the study of Haiyang & Volpe (2002) that conducted survey of financial literacy among college students in the USA. Their findings shows that women generally have less knowledge about personal finance topics. The study further revealed that gender differences remain statistically significant after controlling for other factors. They observed further that women generally have less enthusiasm and the willingness to learn about personal finance topics than men do. However, the findings of the study is in line with the assertion of Martinez et al(2007) that the idea of becoming an entrepreneur is more and more attractive to students, especially the females, because it is seen as a valuable way of participating in the labor market without losing one's independence

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on these findings, the following recommendation are made

1. Students need to be involved in internship activities with business to gain real practical business experience. The teaching and assessment methods for entrepreneurship should not only focus on traditional (passive) methods but also on innovative (active) methods such as business simulation and involvement in business activities
2. Business owners should be involved in entrepreneurship education. The business owners should be invited to deliver lectures to students about entrepreneurship.
3. Business owners should also be willing to act as mentors to students. The link between university and business should be enhanced to promote entrepreneurship.
4. Universities should provide support and resources to promote entrepreneurship on the campus. Each university to have entrepreneurship incubator centre.

5. Government agencies that support entrepreneurship in Nigeria such as the Small and Medium Enterprise Development Agency (SMEDA) and Community Banks should include student entrepreneurship in their strategic framework. These agencies and banks should also be involved in the teaching of entrepreneurship. The organizations should be involved in teaching students on the kind of business plans that are likely to be successful and how to access finance.
6. Would be Student entrepreneurs should form student groups that support entrepreneurship on the campus in places where there are not such groups in order to improve their entrepreneurial skills and competencies.
7. Nigeria Universities need to organized more entrepreneurship activities to influence the students to involve in business activities. Through the exposure in business activities, the students will be influenced and motivated to engage more in entrepreneurship education.

CONCLUSIONS

With the introduction of entrepreneurship education into the curriculum of university education it has become imperative that these citadels of learning are expected to play central role in a process where the primary objective is to ensure that the future leaders maintain a secure platform for employment, economic growth and improved welfare. The main purpose of the study was to examine the perception of undergraduate VTE University students that have been expose to entrepreneurship education on their perceived relevance of entrepreneurship education. The results show that there were positive perceptions towards entrepreneurship education as they are of the opinion that it is effective with respect to certain outcomes It also establishes that entrepreneurship education should not only provide theoretical knowledge but also able to assist their students on establishing an entrepreneurship mindset through developing entrepreneurial skills, behaviors and attitudes, and train them with entrepreneurial abilities to support them to start their own business venture or engage in entrepreneurship activities.

IMPLICATIONS

For a country to be technologically developed, her citizens, most especially youths involve in vocational and technical education, should have the right attitude toward creation of wealth. This is in order to stem the high rate of unemployment in a developing nation like Nigeria. The universities in Nigeria are expected to present entrepreneurial education in such a manner as to elicit the interest of students in entrepreneurial activities. A review of the entrepreneurial curriculum to accommodate the short comings noticed either in the content or at the implementation stage of the current entrepreneur curriculum will go a long way in putting Nigeria in the right step toward the much desired industrialization of the country and invariably reduce crime occasioned by unemployment.

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