THE SUCCESS OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION INITIATIVE AND THE FACTOR OF CONGRUENCE BETWEEN THE OBJECTIVES OF POLICYMAKERS AND IMPLEMENTERS: THE CASE OF SCOTTISH UNIVERSITY LEVEL INITIATIVE

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ABSTRACT: *The aim of this study was to investigate from the perspective of the academics implementing the Scottish University level entrepreneurship education, the effects of lack of convergence between the objectives of policymakers and that of the implementers of the initiative on the success of the initiative. It emerged from the study that most of the academics are of the opinion that entrepreneurship education at the university level would not necessarily result in increasing business start-ups, and so the academics' objectives for the courses/programmes are not wholly in line with that of the policymakers, leading to a near failure of the initiative as graduate businesses are not in the biotechnology industries as desired by the policymakers but in restaurants and retailing. In view of the Scottish experience of lack of objectives congruence which partly account for the poor outcome of the initiative, governments that may be contemplating initiating similar schemes should have their objectives made clear to the implementing institutions; and there should also be a clearly defined relationship and channels of communication in order to ensure transparency and effective implementation and monitoring.*

KEYWORDS: Entrepreneurship Education, Scottish Initiative, Objectives Congruence

INTRODUCTION

In line with the UK government's policy agenda, 'Building Regional Capacity for Innovation, Skills and R&D' (DTI web-based 11/08/05), Scottish Enterprise was among the first regional development agencies to set a strong policy towards developing business start-ups and the development of entrepreneurship by launching 'The Business Birth Rate Strategy' in 1993. (Scottish Enterprise web 11/08/05)

This policy has the focus of 'increasing the contribution of education to the development of entrepreneurship' by developing enterprise among young people, schools and university students, and socially-excluded groups' (Scottish Enterprise web 11/08/05), with the policy objectives given below. According to Hayward G. and Sundnes O., (Autumn 2000 web), in having this policy implemented,

> 'Scottish Enterprise attempted to extend the provision of entrepreneurship education across the university by entering into explicit contractual arrangements with host

institutions, by integrating the initiative into the academic framework of the university and by emphasizing the practical application of the knowledge and skills gained by students for economic purposes.'

Research Problem

According to Fosu and Effah (2013), Scottish university graduate entrepreneurs were not operating in cutting edge knowledge driven and high performing technology-based businesses as expected; but were running restaurants, retail stores and furniture manufacturing, and that most of their businesses were small and often self-employed. From the deliberations in the literature, the root cause of this outcome can be linked to lack of clear understanding of the objectives the educational intervention is meant to achieve. According to Fosu and Effah (2013: 147, quoting Hytti and O'Gorman 2004) policy makers and educators need to have a thorough understanding of the diverse and alternative aims and objectives of enterprise education interventions to achieve the desired result.

The question that became obvious was: do the implementers of the Scottish university level entrepreneurship education's objectives have congruence with those of the policymakers? This question was looked at from the perspective of the academics involved in the implementation of the initiative.

The aim of the study was to investigate from the perspective of the academics implementing the initiative at the university level, the effects of lack of convergence between their objectives and that of policymakers of the Scottish entrepreneurship education initiative. The specific objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To find out the policy makers' objectives for tertiary level entrepreneurship education in Scotland;
2. To find out the academia's objectives for entrepreneurship education at the tertiary level in Scotland;
3. To investigate the kind of relationships between the implementers (academia) and the policy makers.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Entrepreneurial attributes can be born with, or nurtured by conscientious efforts (Bridge et. al, 2009). It is asserted that individuals who possess entrepreneurial attributes have a high propensity to engage in entrepreneurial activities (Raab et al., 2005).

Mahadea (2001) is of the opinion that practical entrepreneurship can be engendered in people by offering appropriate training and gaining of experience, which would lead to developing entrepreneurial attributes and capacity essential in influencing the quest in individuals for startups. Entrepreneurial capacity refers to the mindset, motivation, readiness and passion of individuals to start new firms and the extent to which they possess the knowledge and skills required to adequately pursue them, which entrepreneurship education has as a focus (Global Entrepreneurship Monitor 2013).

Empirical studies have identified a relationship between positive attitude toward startups and entrepreneurship education programmes. According to Hatten and Ruhland (1995) students participants in entrepreneurship programmes tend to have positive attitude towards entrepreneurship and are more likely to become entrepreneurs than those without such an

exposure. Similarly, Souitaris et al.'s (2007) study of entrepreneurship programmes concluded that individual's attitude toward entrepreneurship is enhanced when taken through enterprise education. It can therefore be concluded with a level of optimism that individuals who go through entrepreneurship programmes are likely to have the mindset, motivation, readiness and passion for entrepreneurial activities compared to those who do not have such exposures (Schwarz et al., 2009).

Such programmes require heavy investments which academic institutions and other training outfits cannot in most cases on their own provide the seed money for. Active role of government has therefore been found to be crucial in having an enhanced and successful entrepreneurship training (Pietrobelli et al., 2004). There are research reports on identified relationship between new venture creation and government sponsored entrepreneurship programmes, a typical evidence being Britain's graduate enterprise programme which has led to a large number of university graduates starting their own businesses (Brown, 1990). The story is also true in the case of USA. US government sponsored self-employment assistance programme also increased the propensity of youths having startups (Benus, 1994). But the success of such innovative initiatives would depend to a large extent, on clearly defined objectives and the destinations of such efforts. Failure in this regard would have the initiatives underachieve; the Scottish experience being a typical example which is the subject of this investigation.

METHODOLOGY

The Research Paradigm

An interpretive paradigm with qualitative research method was adopted for the investigation. This approach was considered the most appropriate for this research as the views and perception of academics involved in entrepreneurship education from four universities in Scotland on objectives congruence and the success of the initiative was the main data used in the project. Secondary data on the government policy objectives for entrepreneurship education and the performance of the policy implementation from the perspective of academics and writers were used to supplement the primary data.

Given the exploratory nature of the study, this paradigm was deemed right, as phenomenological inquiry was rated most appropriate, for its power of enabling the understanding of phenomena in context-specific settings. (*Hoepfl,* Fall 1997; Patton 2002 quoting Strauss and Corbin, 1990; Patton, 1990)

Furthermore, qualitative methods was adopted in order to have a better understanding of the perception of academics on this subject matter; and to have more in-depth insight and information that may not be easily be ascertained quantitatively.(Fosu and Effah 2013)

This study used interviews to collect data from the academics on their perception on the objectives congruence of the academic institutions implementing the initiative and that of government/policymakers. Based on the nature of the data, qualitative approach was used, as 'qualitative interviews yield direct quotations from people about their experiences, opinions,

feelings and knowledge', (Fosu and Effah 2013:145 quoting Patton, 2002) thereby enabling the achievement of our study objectives.

Data Collection and Analysis

The study required both primary in the form of views of academics implementing the initiative and secondary data which is basically the policy objectives of the scheme.

The primary data was sought by interviews with semi-structured questionnaire administered on academics involved in the higher level entrepreneurship education in four selected universities in Scotland. The respondents were selected from Queen Margaret University (1 respondent), Napier University (2 respondents), Edinburgh University (2 respondents) and Strathclyde University (1 respondent). These universities were four out of the six implementing institutions in the region. They were purposively selected in the light of time and financial constraints. The purpose of the interviews with the academics was to find out their objectives as implementers of the entrepreneurship education programmes at the university level; and their awareness of the policy-makers objectives for the initiative and the kind of relationship that existed between them and the policymakers.

The secondary data were on policy objectives of the initiative; and these were examined and compared with that of the academics'. This was done by assessment of the documented policy issues of entrepreneurship education in Scotland. These data were gleaned from DTI website, SIE website, Scottish Executive website, reports, journals and other sources. The secondary data on the empirical review on entrepreneurship in general were collected from sources such as books, journals websites etc, through extensive search.

At the very beginning of the collection process of the primary data, coding of the responses was started with the bid to identifying patterns to serve as data blocks for the content analysis and for comparing the outcome with the policymakers' objectives which was our main secondary data to counterpart the primary data in testing the congruence between the objectives of the two parties to the initiative.

Obviously, the approach to the analysis of the data was analytic induction which helps in 'systematic examination of similarities' (Punch 2005:196), and difference of perceptions about the objectives of the two parties involved in the entrepreneurship education at the university level in various institutions in Scotland. The analysis was question-based so the answers given by the interviewees were analysed by first coding them and finding the common trend, digressions, convergence etc. This approach helps to discern easily the line of thinking, perception and practice of the academics of entrepreneurship education who are informed by the objectives of universities involved in the implementation (Fosu and Effah 2013).

FINDINGS

The Scottish Government Policy Objectives for Entrepreneurship Education at the University Level

The Scottish Enterprise's (Scottish government Agency) objectives for entrepreneurship education at the university level are to offer students the opportunity:

1. "to learn about the processes, risks and rewards of entrepreneurship and venture capitalism …"; (Hayward April 2005 web) and therefore ultimately
2. "to increase the number of new business start-ups by graduates" (ibid) as part of the Business Birth-rate Strategy for Scotland.

The university level entrepreneurship education initiative in Scottish universities is part of the approaches for making the 'Business Birth-rate strategy' work which is meant to promote economic development in Scotland. (Fosu and Effah, 2013) This new assignment given to the universities has given universities new dimensions in their roles within society and their relation to processes of wealth creation. (ibid) The entrepreneurship education was a new concept as the entrepreneurial knowledge is supposed to be different from other sorts of knowledge acquired in the universities, and also to consolidate all the knowledge acquired during their studies; and the approach (teaching and learning) of acquiring the knowledge is also to be different from those normally associated with university teaching. The Scottish Enterprise therefore entered into contract with the implementing institutions to give an explicit place and attention in their curricula, to the initiative.

According to Hayward (April 2005 web) the initiative has a new dimension whereby universities have to bid for startup monies from Scottish Enterprise to fund the development of entrepreneurship education centres. In this regard the Scottish Enterprise made available a total of £1 million as direct funding seed money to the universities for developing courses for the teaching of entrepreneurship for undergraduates and postgraduates to meet the policy objectives stated above. The Scottish Enterprise developed the curriculum to be taught and the teaching and assessment modalities to be followed at the centres, in order to achieve the desired learning outcomes. Six successful universities in their bids were provided with monies to start the programme centres; and five of these were located within Business or Management Schools of the universities (Fosu and Effah, 2013)

The Objectives of the Academia and their Relationship with the Initiators (Policymakers) of the Scottish University Level Entrepreneurship Education Programme

Interviews were conducted with six university lecturers in four universities (as mentioned under data collection and analysis) in Scotland involved in the entrepreneurship education programme. The interviewees were asked questions on: why the need for entrepreneurship education in Scotland, especially at the university level; what their short and long term objectives for the entrepreneurship education are, among other questions which are discussed below. The respondents will be referred in this report as academic/interviewee A, B.….F for the purpose of anonymity.

Respondents were asked why the need for entrepreneurship education at the higher level of education in Scotland; and most (five out of six) of the respondent said it is the implementation of the UK government's policy to promote entrepreneurialism. The UK government believes that commercialisation of science (translating new knowledge into new

innovative businesses and because of their nature, they have great commercial value) is essential for future prosperity. Academic B explains why the UK government sees entrepreneurship education at the university level as a framework for achieving its policy objectives:

> It is useful skills development framework in the sense that it helps develop skills and positive attitude in people. It will help students (management, engineering, computer and other science students) identify the opportunities within their core degree discipline. Thus it will help them in their way of thinking about the opportunities they can have in the environment they are operating in.

Other academics mentioned provision of basic employability skills as the crust and intent of enterprise education. In respect of Scotland which is the focus of this study, academic C asserted that entrepreneurship education at the higher education level is a Scottish Executive's policy to boost entrepreneurialism, based on the fact that the level of entrepreneurship among the population is less than it should be. Entrepreneurship education at the university level was seen as a vehicle for enhancing the level of entrepreneurial skills among Scottish graduates and youth.

Interviewee F added that entrepreneurship education at the university level became desirable because Scottish Enterprise believes entrepreneurial failure is an important cause of relative economic underperformance in Scotland. It therefore considers it a need for more business start-ups at all levels of the Scottish society. A lot of start-ups is needed because only a small number of them grow into large businesses.

Concerning short term objectives of the implementing institutions for the entrepreneurship education, half of the interviewees said they want to have modules that are appealing to students; and want to continuously improve upon the modules, and consolidate them. This can be achieved by keeping up to date with the latest thinking in the entrepreneurship arena in order to have a broad view of issues. Some of them added that they would like to feed their research findings into the courses in order to enrich them and keep up to date with the reality. Few of them mentioned that they want students to have clear understanding of the importance of entrepreneurship education and how businesses operate in different settings. Other short term objectives mentioned by few of them was to have many students from different departments being interested in entrepreneurship courses; and that eventually some of these departments would make some of the entrepreneurship modules their core subjects.

Regarding long term objectives of the universities, five out of the six interviewees stated that their students who would enter into employment would be enterprising and those who would not have considered self-employment would consider it as a career option. In fulfilment of this objective, raising students' confidence level to have can-do attitude and broadening the vision of students on the possibilities of future startups are complementary long term objectives of some of the academics. It is hoped by majority of the interviewees that some of the students would eventually start their own businesses. Interestingly two of the universities have business startup incubation centres which offer support to students who have innovative ideas to start implementing them while still students. The centres support them in sourcing of funding, mentoring and accessing necessary services and facilities. It is a long term objective of the entrepreneurship course of these universities to have more students to use the centres as business incubators while at the university and graduate with their businesses ready to be

roll-out. Two of them mentioned having most of the students in their universities take an entrepreneurship module as their long term objective. One added that it is their long term wish to go international through exchange programmes.

On the question of relationship between the implementers of entrepreneurship education programme and the policy makers, 50% of the academics mentioned diverse links they have with the policy makers.   One version is that they have been having dealings with the Scottish Executive, Scottish Enterprise, Chamber of Commerce, Business Gateway etc at seminars and conferences but not on a direct bilateral basis. It was also mentioned that they have informal links with the Scottish Enterprise Edinburgh & Lothian, the Local Enterprise Company, the Business Gateway, the Princes Trust, the Scottish Institute for Enterprise etc. Students who want to start businesses are directed by their universities to these bodies for financial and other forms of assistance.   It was added that they do not have a standing relationship with the Scottish Enterprise; and at the UK level they try to advice government on some of it 'blinking' policies, with no great response. The only formal relationship with policy makers is with the Scottish Higher Education Funding Council which together with other awarding bodies gives approval to all programmes run at the tertiary level in Scotland. This is an indication of policy gap in the programme in respect of monitoring the policy implementation.

On monitoring and evaluation of the programme implementation, only two of the interviewees answered that they monitor and evaluate their course with the number of students who enrol and the number of students who want to implement their ideas at the incubation centres. One also said that in his university the quality of business plans students produce are used as the measuring rod. Students work in teams to produce business plans for business ideas that the groups come out with. Most of the interviewees said they do not monitor or evaluate their courses in any way. When further asked whether they have links with students after they have completed the courses, almost all of them answered no. They have no database on passed out students; an explanation was given that it is the responsibility of the alumni to have information on past students.

Following from the relationship question is the sources of funding for the entrepreneurship courses run in the universities. Most of them answered that the courses are resourced by funding received from the government and the tuition fees. This is in line with the fact that in most of the universities entrepreneurship education is not treated differently from other courses as the policymakers expected. Only two of them stated that they receive funding support from few benevolent individuals and private organisations.

DISCUSSION

 It is evident from the analysis that majority of the academics are aware that the entrepreneurship education they are running is government policy product. That is, it is Scottish Enterprise's policy for raising the level of entrepreneurialism among Scots, especially among university graduates.   Most of the academics see entrepreneurship education as a framework for developing in students work and practical skills that will help them in their careers.   Others also consider entrepreneurship education as an avenue for getting involved with the community and thus having a role beyond teaching and learning.

The implementers of the initiative appear to have diverse short-term and long-term objectives most of which are not in line with that of Scottish Enterprise/policymakers. Most the academics hope that eventually some of the students could start businesses, but that is not their aim for the initiative. They believe that the students would be enterprising on the job; but starting up businesses by graduates is a remote objective.   It is only two of the universities that have clear objectives which are in line with that of the government; and these universities are embarking on actions which are aimed at achieving their set objectives by having start-up incubation centres which offer support to students who have innovative ideas to start implementing them while still students and after.   This emphasises once again that generally, the entrepreneurship courses are not given the required special attention by the academics.

Scottish Enterprise should therefore make its objectives for the entrepreneurship education clearer to the universities and resource them to enable them deliver as expected. In addition to the fact that most of the academics' objectives for entrepreneurship education are not completely in line with that of the government, there are no monitoring and evaluation systems in place to check and balance the implementation. There is therefore the need for the academics to realign their objectives with that of the government; and checks and balances system to be put in place to keep the universities on track to achieving the government objectives for the initiative.

It became also clear that the policymakers and the universities do not have any formal relationship in practice, but just on paper and informal interactions. Because the entrepreneurship education is of strategic importance to the government, there should be an open communication and relationship between the policymakers and the implementers of the programme, so that both would keep themselves informed of the progress of the initiative. The onus is on the policymakers to create a platform for regular interaction as they are the initiators and the funders of the programme.

IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE INITIATIVES

With the sprawling problem of tertiary graduates and youth unemployment, especially in the developing world, self-employment/business startups are advocated as alternatives to career in the corporate world.

Many research reports have revealed that entrepreneurship education could motivate student's interest in entrepreneurship as a career; and this is demonstrated in USA and many European countries by increasing number of students who consider running their own businesses as an alternative career path (Duffy and Stevenson, 1984).   This does not occur out of the blue, but students have to be prepared to have entrepreneurial mindset right from the beginning of their educational career by being taken through entrepreneurship-based educational curricula. According to Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM), entrepreneurship education would among others shape students' overall perception of entrepreneurship opportunities in a country and motivate them for entrepreneurial activities. (GEM, 2013). Entrepreneurship education being a specialised curriculum, requires large investment which academic institutions cannot solely provide. Most of the initiatives are mooted by governments with the educational institutions being implementing partners of the initiatives.

In view of the Scottish experience of lack of objectives congruence which partly account for the poor outcome of the initiative, governments that may be contemplating initiating similar schemes should have clearly defined objectives and be made clear to the implementing institutions. There should also be a clearly defined relationship and channels of communication in order to ensure transparency and monitoring of the implementation.

CONCLUSION

From the analysis of the data and discussion of the findings, the following conclusions have been reached.

It became evident that the academics are aware of implementing government policy which is aimed at increasing business birth rate. But they are not giving the policy initiative the attention it deserves, in order to achieve the objectives for which the courses/programmes are being run. The initiative was not given the needed priority but treated like any other course run in the universities. Also most of them are of the notion that entrepreneurship education at the university level would not necessarily result in increasing business start-ups, and so the academics' objectives for the courses/programmes are not wholly in line with that of the policymakers. This is a defeatist attitude which has led to a near failure of the initiative as graduate businesses are not in the biotechnology industries but in restaurants, retailing etc.

The problem of divergent objectives for entrepreneurship education initiative has resulted partly due to nonexistent of formal relationship between the academics and the policy-makers, hence no checks and balances were in place to always keep the implementers on track. It was expected on the part of policy-makers in furtherance of the initiative to occasionally, bring together important stakeholders like successful entrepreneurs, representatives from the business community and business advisory services to interact with the academics to update them on current business realities and how the initiative could be modified or improved in order for it to be abreast with time. Future initiative should therefore consider these factors and deal with them appropriately.

In conclusion, the entrepreneurship education can be used as mechanism for preparing students enter into self-employment as a career alternative but the success of such an initiative would depend to a large extent on effective coordination and monitoring of the implementation. It would therefore be imperative for policy initiators to get the implementers involved at the planning stage so that there would be a collective ownership of the initiative. This would impel the implementers to take their responsibility for the scheme more seriously so that the policy objectives would continually be their implementation road map.

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