

AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE APPROPRIATE STRATEGIES USED BY LECTURERS IN THE TEACHING OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION IN UNIVERSITIES IN RIVERS STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

The study investigated entrepreneurship education and curriculum implementation strategies in universities in Rivers State. One research question guided the study whereas a hypothesis was tested. The study adopted the descriptive design. The population of the study were the entrepreneurial studies lecturers in the three public universities in Rivers State. A sample size of 30 lecturers from entrepreneurship and business related departments/faculties were purposively sampled in the three universities in Rivers State namely: University of Port-Harcourt, Rivers State University and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education. The validated questionnaire instrument used for the study had a reliability index of 0.81, using Cronbach alpha statistical test. Mean was used to analyse the data to address the research question, whereas t-test was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 alpha level. Findings of the study revealed that 'group project', 'case study' and 'assigning projects to students and supporting them' are the most appropriate strategies for teaching entrepreneurship at the undergraduate level. Recommendations made among others include that: adequate funds should be provided for universities and other higher institutions in order to enable them provide infrastructures and manpower requirements for effective implementation of entrepreneurship education curriculum, universities authorities should workout modalities for institutionalizing activity-based and pragmatic methods of learning entrepreneurship with a view to maximizing the benefits inherent in entrepreneurship.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship, Education, Curriculum, Teaching Strategies, Undergraduate, Universities, Rivers State.

Introduction

Education is a process of acquiring and developing knowledge, skills, attitudes and other valuable attributes and behaviours that empower individuals to

become useful members of the society. The global problem of graduate unemployment has become embarrassingly very high in Nigeria, and raises questions about the type of education Nigerian state is offering to her citizens. The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) reported that 28.58million persons in Nigeria workforce are not employed in the last quarter of 2016(NBS, 2017). NBS further reports that youths within the age bracket of 15-24 are the most affected population. Fresh graduates of higher institutions in Nigeria are majorly in this age group and require job on graduation to keep them out of crime related activities. Babalola cited in Akudolu (2010) observed that despite federal government efforts to fulfil its promise of creating two million jobs every year to cushion the high rate of unemployment, many higher institutions' graduates are still languishing with little hope of getting a good job.

Obanya (2002) posited that for graduate unemployment rate to be reversed, there is urgent need to return to the basics and re-examine the goals of higher education in Nigeria, which emphasises "cultivation of human talent and creative/imaginative potentials through all round development"(pg. 9). Lasisi and Nwoke (2009) opined that entrepreneurship education seeks to prepare youths to be creative in thinking, responsible to self in taking initiatives, identification of business opportunities and taking actions involving risks in order to turn imagined business ventures into reality. This is in line with Nigeria education goals because; entrepreneurship is an effective employment generation strategy, capable of leading to economic freedom and self-reliance for all people irrespective of gender and physical disability (Lasisi & Nwoke, 2009). In recognition of entrepreneurship as a strategy for containing the pandemic problem of graduate unemployment, the federal government in 2007 via the National Universities Commission (NUC) directed all universities in Nigeria to commence entrepreneurial studies starting from 2007/2008 academic session (Wobo & Okafor, 2016: NUC, 2007) . According to NUC (2007), the formulated entrepreneurial courses are compulsory for all undergraduate students, though some universities have extended entrepreneurship education to the post-graduate levels.

Entrepreneurship education in many Nigeria universities is characterised by lethargic attitude across the board, inappropriate curriculum and teaching methodologies on the part of the authorities and lecturers. More importantly, the need to use appropriate strategy in teaching entrepreneurship education appears to be receiving very little attention. It is against this background that this study investigated the strategies used by lectures in teaching entrepreneurship at the undergraduate level.

Research reports suggest that entrepreneurship education is a very important instrument for addressing the challenge of unemployment and poverty. Since its introduction in Nigeria universities in 2007, its impact is yet to be observed in the context of reducing graduate unemployment rate. Despite that graduates are required to compulsorily pass through designated entrepreneurship

courses, majority of them are still stranded in the labour market after years of graduation. Could it be that the methods adopted in the implementation of entrepreneurship curriculum is ineffective or flawed altogether. Whatever be the case, the fact that graduate unemployment rate in Nigeria is dangerously high is undeniable, and invariably heightens the dangers of existential crisis ravaging the labour market, as many job-seekers are facing stout frustration and consequences of ruinous decisions they took in attempt to make a living.

The concept of entrepreneurship has been viewed from different standpoints. Basically, entrepreneurship is derived from French word called 'entrepreneur', which refers to person who engages in activity and achieves something he/she undertakes (Amesi, 2017). Ihiegbulem (2016) defined entrepreneurship as a desire that energizes individuals to start, organize and manage ventures to make profit despite the risks of losing resources invested. Entrepreneurship education has also been conceptualized as training provided for learners to energize their faculties, creative potentials and ability to transform ideas into actions giving birth to new commodities, innovations and taking initiatives and risks in starting up businesses in order to make profit (European Commission, 2015). It can equally be defined as the processes involving abstraction of new things and development of actionable business ideas, mobilizing resources for putting the ideas into practical application to create utilities that command economic values.

There is existential debate over the teachability of entrepreneurship. Some scholars argue that entrepreneurs are born and not groomed, pointing out that it is impossible to teach entrepreneurship because it is more of personality trait and psychological make-up, hence cannot be taught. Supporting this idea, Fayolle and Gailly (2008) opined that talent and temperament is not teachable, whereas Kuratko (2003) insisted that entrepreneurship or some important aspects of it can be taught. Zahra, Mansoreh and Narges, (2012) pointed out that in some profession such as law and medicine, students are taught together, yet some perform so extraordinarily and above others. The reasons behind probable display of unequalled skills among graduates could be blamed on intervening variables relevant for explaining entrepreneurship (Fayolle & Gailly 2008). Jack and Anderson as cited in (Zahra et al, 2012) explained that entrepreneurship education has elements of 'art' and 'science' in which the former involves teachable business management skills for starting-up and managing business outfits, while the latter is basically inventive and creative prowess which are more of 'talents' and unteachable. In this light, it is basically from the artistic point of view that entrepreneurship scholars found logical foundation and justifications underpinning entrepreneurship education. Nevertheless, Akudolu (2010) remarked that some psychological variables related to entrepreneurship can be awakened, revitalized and modified through re-orientation and teaching. For example, attitude, interest, perseverance, initiative, creativity and other values can be imparted, refined or increased.

Having highlighted the foundation of entrepreneurship education, entrepreneurship education is therefore the process of preparing individuals to be able to conceptually and skilfully identify business opportunities that many others failed to recognize and respond to (Kauffman Foundation, 2007). Igbozuruike and Okafor(2017)views it as a process of inspiring understanding, capacities and the right attitude in students in order to help them prosper entrepreneurially. Some of the pivotal entrepreneurial skills relevant for flourishing in business ventures are exposed to students in entrepreneurial classes. Some of these vital skills are but not limited to problem-solving skill, communication skill, finance skill, marketing and sales skill, leadership skill, administrative skill and management skill. Others are information management skill, risk taking/management skill, and self-motivation among others (Igbozuruike & Okafor, 2017). Inculcating these skills with blend of practical mentorship and supervisory supports is considered very essential for ensuring that students develop key industry skills and attitudes. Apart from the utility of entrepreneurship education in providing avenue for acquisition of skills, attitude and knowledge for establishing and managing business ventures, it also instils other essential concepts such as self-reliance, discipline, determination, perseverance, and faith among others. These concepts have strong bearing on self-worth, self-esteem and virtues upon which philosophies that guide individuals' entrepreneurial objectives are contrived and pursued.

On the global outlook, entrepreneurship education is not entirely new. Shigeru Fijii is credited to be the pioneering teacher of entrepreneurship, with his teaching antecedence dating back to 1938 at the Kobe University in Japan (Zahra et al, 2012). Zhang and Markusen (1999) reported that twenty six (26) business schools offered entrepreneurial related course in China. Okah and Odelola (2009) stated that in Latin America, entrepreneurship course are taught in universities in Honduras, Columbia, Mexico, Peru and Brazil, whereas the universities in United States of America (USA) are at the forefront of entrepreneurship research and education globally. Harvard Business School is reputed to have started teaching courses on small scale business management as early as 1940s (Zahra et al, 2012).

Studies have shown that many university students like the idea of being an entrepreneur but lacked entrepreneurial knowledge and skills to start-up a business (Uche, Nwabueze & Ememe, 2009). Asodike (2008) found out that self-employed graduates mostly do not have entrepreneurial skills necessary for expanding their enterprises. Nwite (2016) investigated the exposure of undergraduate students to entrepreneurship education in Ebonyi State University (Nigeria) and reported that entrepreneurship education had a “significant relationship with post-graduate job creation ability” of students (pg. 25). Similarly, Lasisi and Nwoke (2009) study on relationship between entrepreneurship education and national development, revealed a strong relationship between entrepreneurship education and national development.

Studies have shown that contents of entrepreneurship education curriculum in Nigerian universities are inappropriate, inadequate, hazy and evolving (Okah and Odelola 2009). Akudolu (2010) and Finland Ministry of Education (2009) independently declared that entrepreneurship education largely fall within the purview of affective domain of learning, noting that attitude, values, motivation and determination, knowledge and skills are crucial for achieving objectives and goals. Bogoro (2015) remarked that content should be tailored to be in conformity with the socio-economic uniqueness of different societies.

Anene and Imam (n.d) survey highlighted the most acceptable curriculum contents for entrepreneurship education in context of undergraduate students' rankings; operating a saloon was ranked first, followed by interior decoration, electrical/installation, electric wiring, fashion designing and bakery. Others are operating a business centre, graphic designing, making of decorative pots, raising of flowers and hair weaving among others. Okah and Odelola (2009) opined that selecting and including what is right is not the answer to content related questions, but rather refining what works. They continued that it is not only about lecturing students on 'create-a-job- alternative' , but also teaching the students that enterprising is profitable and possible (motivation). In other words, curriculum should be regularly evaluated to ascertain the extent the contents taught is producing the desired outcomes.

Although the curriculum of some universities require undergraduate students to proceed on industrial work experience spreading from six months to one year, at the end of which each student is expected to present a documented report of their experience to their respective supervisors/mentors (Bogoro, 2015).Zahra et al, (2012) study on effective strategy of teaching entrepreneurship reported that 'group project' and 'case study' are the most effective approaches.

Observations and recent studies have shown that the strategies some universities use in teaching entrepreneurship is not producing best outcomes. Nwite (2016) observed that entrepreneurship education is desirable but choosing appropriate strategy has been a retrogressive dilemma for many lectures that may have little or no practical competence and experiences to properly mentor and coach students effectively. Zahra et al, (2012) observed that choosing teaching method in entrepreneurship education depends on the objective, contents, the learners and schools' resources. It is generally agreed by scholars that lecture/expository or the traditional method of teaching has little or no value to entrepreneurship education. The apparent lack of suitable strategy and cost effective methods of teaching entrepreneurship effectively is posing significant impediment to entrepreneurial studies. Zahra et al, (2012) opined that apprenticeship approach would be suitable for teaching students who chose entrepreneurship as a career. Whereas workshops, project works, guest speaker, role model strategies are mainly for stimulating and inspiring entrepreneurial attributes (Mwasalwiba, 2010). However, there appear to be consensus on the

efficacy of activity-based and learner centred approaches to teaching entrepreneurship. Even at that, the cost implications associated with these approaches, in addition to its incongruity with university system poses methodical challenges (Mwasalwiba, 2010).

In the light of the above, this paper examines the modalities of entrepreneurship education in universities, with a view to determining the appropriate and effective strategies for imparting entrepreneurial skills in undergraduates in Rivers State. In this regard, this study addressed the question of; what are the appropriate strategies for teaching entrepreneurship at the undergraduate level of university education? Also tested was a lone hypothesis that compared the mean ratings of male and female entrepreneurship lecturers on the appropriate strategies for teaching entrepreneurship at the undergraduate level of university education.

Method

The study adopted the descriptive survey design. The population of the study comprised entrepreneurial studies lecturers in the three universities in Rivers State. A sample size of 30 (18 male and 12 female) lecturers from entrepreneurship and business related departments/faculties were purposively sampled from each of the three (3) universities in Rivers State namely: University of Port Harcourt (10 lecturers), Rivers State University (10 lecturers) and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education (10 lecturers). The validated instrument has a reliability index of 0.81 using Cronbach's alpha statistic and SPSS software. The instrument was structured to reflect the strategies through which entrepreneurship could be taught. Input of experts and comments of the lectures in the field of entrepreneurship studies were incorporated in formulation of the questionnaire items. The questionnaire items were scaled using a modified Likert type scale of Very Appropriate 4 points, Appropriate 3 points, Less Appropriate 2 points and Not Appropriate 1 point. Mean scores of the items were used to answer the research question. Items with mean of 2.50 and above were accepted while those below 2.50 were rejected. The hypothesis was tested with t-test at at 0.05 significant level.

Results

Research Question: What are the appropriate strategies for teaching entrepreneurship at the undergraduate level of university education?

Table 1: Mean ratings of male and female lectures opinion on appropriate strategy for teaching entrepreneurship.

S/N	Description of items	Mean		Mean-set	Remarks	Rank
		Male	Female			
1	Individual Project	2.90	3.36	3.13	Accepted	4 th
2	Group Project	3.40	3.54	3.47	Rejected	1 st
3	Simulation	2.66	2.74	2.70	Accepted	9 th
4	Lecture	2.02	2.38	2.20	Rejected	12 th
5	Case Study	3.01	3.65	3.33	Accepted	2 nd
6	Invitation of Guest Speaker	2.42	2.32	2.37	Rejected	11 th
7	Dialogue/interview with Entrepreneurs	2.68	2.59	2.63	Accepted	10 th
8	Group Discussion	2.93	2.72	2.83	Accepted	8 th
9	Tasking Students to Develop New ventures	3.09	2.97	3.03	Accepted	6 th
10	Assigning Projects to students and Supporting them	3.15	3.25	3.20	Accepted	3 rd
11	Excursion	2.86	3.00	2.93	Accepted	7 th
12	Problem-Solving	3.07	3.13	3.10	Accepted	5 th
Aggregates		2.85	2.97			

As shown in table 1 above, lecturers ranked 'group project' and 'case study' first and second with mean scores of 3.47 and 3.33 respectively, whereas 'assigning projects to students and supporting them' (3.20) was ranked third. Also, 'individual project', 'problem-solving' and 'tasking students to develop new venture' were rated appropriate strategies as they ranked fourth, fifth and sixth as indicated by their respective mean scores of 3.13, 3.10 and 3.03. Out of the twelve strategies/methods sampled for determining their appropriateness to teaching entrepreneurship, only 10 were accepted at varying degrees, whereas the remaining two strategies were rejected or deemed inappropriate by the respondents. It is interesting to notice that 'lecture' method had the least mean score of 2.20 and stands rejected. The findings also revealed that 'invitation of guest speaker'(2.36) and 'dialogue/interview with entrepreneurs'(2.63) were respectively ranked 11th and 10th out of the 12 teaching strategies investigated.

Hypothesis: There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female entrepreneurship lecturers on the appropriate strategies for teaching entrepreneurship at the undergraduate level of university education.

Table 1: t-test of the difference between the opinion of male and female lecturers on appropriate strategy for teaching entrepreneurship.

S/No	Description	N	Mean	SD	d/f	t-cal.	t-crit.	Sig. Level	Remark
1.	Male	18	2.85	0.90	28	0.36	1.96	0.05	Not Significant (H ₀ Accepted)
2.	Female	12	2.97	0.89					

Table 1 above shows the t-test of mean ratings of male and female entrepreneurship lecturers on the appropriate strategies for teaching entrepreneurship at the undergraduate level. At 28 degrees of freedom and 0.05 significant level, the t-test yielded a t-cal of 0.36 at t-crit of 1.96. Given that the value of t-cal is less than that of t-crit and statistically not significant, the null hypothesis above is accepted. This implies that both the male and female lecturers' opinions on appropriate methods of teaching entrepreneurship are in accord.

Discussion

The findings of the study show that 'group project' is the most effective method of teaching in entrepreneurship context. This might not be unconnected with the fact that 'group project' approach enables students to think collectively, brainstorm on ideas and viable business plans. Students learn at greater pace when they are in small groups; sharing opinions, listening to one another, contrasting and criticizing ideas and reinforcing creative thinking which is a recipe to entrepreneurship. The study also revealed a high mean score of 3.33 for 'case study'. This implies that familiarizing students with success stories of thriving entrepreneurs and businesses – thus highlighting the attitude and entrepreneurial skills as well as other variables that aided successful entrepreneurs to succeed is essential in area of motivating intending entrepreneurs. Case study approach could actually be used alongside with excursion/visitation to the business environment under study. These findings are in-line with Zahra et al (2012), who reported that group project method, individual project method, case study, workshop and problem-solving methods are all activity based driven strategies relevant for teaching entrepreneurship at the higher education level. The findings of this study also indicate that assigning projects to students and supporting them properly is vital. Support could be in form of morale, advisory or facilitation. Akudolu (2010) affirmed the importance of propping up the key affective attributes (attitude,

motivation, courage, passion and perseverance) to act as catalysts for engendering entrepreneurial mind-set in students.

In addition, 'individual project' and 'problem-solving strategies had high mean scores of 3.13 and 3.10 and ranked fifth and sixth positions respectively. These high scores highlight their relevance to entrepreneurship education. These revelations are in consonant with Zahra et al (2012) findings, who reported that 'problem-solving', and 'development of new venture are appropriate for teaching marketing and sales related skills. Evidently, lecture method which is in apparently inappropriate for teaching entrepreneurship, however, it is still widely used by lecturers to teach students entrepreneurship. Although the prospects of using other better methods could be daunting to the school authorities, considering the huge financial requirement associated with most of the activity-based approaches (Mwasalwiba, 2010). The acute financial shortages occasioned by the slump in crude oil prices calls for effective management of financial resources on the part of government given that she is the major financier of public universities where larger numbers of students are studying. This has become pertinent because the opportunity cost of not investing in entrepreneurship education is mounting graduate unemployment rate with proportionate increases in criminality and immorality. If the government can re-allocate some funds appropriated for security to entrepreneurship education, there will be more money for funding the latter while reducing the challenges in the former.

Conclusion

The inclusion of entrepreneurial studies in higher education had been received with encomiums by stake-holders in education. This is because of the perceived benefits that accompany entrepreneurship education as it relate to fast-tracking the impartation of essential skills, experiences and attitude pertinent to starting up, managing and growing of businesses. In spite of several studies carried out in entrepreneurship education, less attention was given to finding effective teaching methods. It is a known fact that in all types of education, the quality of teachers and methods of teaching is vital variables that determines efficiency and effectiveness. This is also particularly true in entrepreneurship education. In the light of the newness of entrepreneurship in Nigeria tertiary institutions, it is necessary to assess and determine the appropriate methods/approaches for imparting the required knowledge and skills undergraduate students will need during and after graduation. It was on this premise that the study investigated appropriate teaching methods in entrepreneurship education and found out some key strategies for inculcating entrepreneurship skills and mentality. Among the ranking strategies are 'group project' and 'case study'. Finally, each strategy has its distinctive features that make it suitable for teaching particular curriculum content. In other words, the nature of curriculum content goes a long way in determining the right method for teaching it. Given that there may not be a single method that

will produce the maximum result. It is important for teachers to identify the strategies that can be used in combination with others to achieve the desired outcomes in student context.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Adequate funds should be provided for universities and other higher institutions in order to enable them provide infrastructures and manpower requirements for effective implementation of entrepreneurship education curriculum.
2. Entrepreneurship lecturers should be equipped with knowledge and skills on how, when and where to use the various methods of teaching entrepreneurship via different capacity building techniques (training and re-training among others).
3. Teaching aids such as laptop, projectors and workshops for teaching the various curriculum contents should be provided, used and maintained.
4. Entrepreneurship education should be fully integrated into the conventional university system; this will facilitate the assimilation of entrepreneurial precepts in other courses offered in the universities.
5. Universities authorities should workout modalities for institutionalizing activity-based and practical methods of learning entrepreneurship.

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