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ENTREPRENEURIAL INTENTION OF UNDERGRADS IN UNIVERSITIES: THE ROLE OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION AND GENDER

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Abstract:

The study explored the relationship between entrepreneurial education and entrepreneurial intention of undergraduate students in universities. An analytic descriptive survey design was employed while a sample of 240 undergrads was selected through a stratified sampling procedure from the study population of 534 students. A structured questionnaire designed on a 5-point Likert scale of strongly agree to strongly disagree was the means of data collection. The instrument was structured and pretested to ascertain the content validity and reliability of the instrument through Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0.76 and 0.85 for entrepreneurial education and orientation. The data were collected through the distribution of the pieces of questionnaire to undergraduate students and were collected. The data were analyzed using hierarchical regression analysis and independent samples t-test. The results indicated that practical and theoretical entrepreneurship education had a positive effect on entrepreneurial intention of undergraduates of universities. We concluded that entrepreneurship education is a key aspect in driving the intention of students towards entrepreneurship. Further, we recommended that both theoretical and practical entrepreneurship classes should be employed in imparting entrepreneurship curriculum contents and knowledge to students.

Keywords: Practical classes, Theoretical classes, Entrepreneurship, Entrepreneurial intention, Entrepreneurial education

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Introduction

Entrepreneurship has been a major driving force for growing economies in all countries (Van et al., 2007). Developing nations grapple with the economic responsibility of providing goods and employment opportunities for her population through entrepreneurship policy thrust and institutional frameworks. Hathaway and Litan, (2014) posit that, entrepreneurial activities stimulate macro-economic advancement viral industrial revolution and determine the structural and sectorial direction of an economy.

Entrepreneurial intention (EI) is the cognitive and mental map of an individual to start a business in the foreseeable future, and the mental plan of business is translated into existence in the nearest future. It is a conscious thought process of individuals aimed at launching new products and new ventures (Thompson, 2009). Thompson (2009) defines EI as "a person intends to establish a new enterprise and consciously plans to do so at some time in the future." Intention can be described as a state of consciousness before action (Buttar, 2015), EI is a key aspect of an individual's decision to start a new business (Nabi et al., 2010). Entrepreneurial start-ups and nascent entrepreneurial activities are offshoots of an individual entrepreneurship premeditation and intention. There is no motivation to actually establish a business without an instance of a prior envisioning and intention to do so. Series of research from several scholars have revealed that the entrepreneurship education (EE) plays a significant role on EI being formed in the mind of an individual. Students receiving EE in schools develop the mindset for EI as an outcome of entrepreneurship curriculum contents learnt in the classroom (Hou et al., 2019; Mei et al., 2020; Zhang and Huang, 2021).

EE is makes colossal contribution to a nation's economic growth as students are impacted knowledge that increases EI. Students develop the recondite aptitude and attitude for idea generation geared toward solving economic problems and wealth creation. Shane (2004) contends that universities offer entrepreneurship education with a view to equipping students with the required and appropriate knowledge base to enable them identify opportunities and harness resources for entrepreneurial venture development. EE serves as a platform for university students to become industrious, skillful, and knowledgeable to value creation which will make them employers of labour and eventual diminution of unemployment rate in a nation. EE programmes appear to be highly beneficial to EI. Furthermore, research has recorded that universities are the seedbeds for developing creative and innovative entrepreneurial initiatives (Cui & Bell, 2022). Accordingly, EE has become increasingly accepted as a compulsory module in the higher education systems around the world (Karlidag-Dennis et al., 2020). EE has been universally underscored as the prime mover for creativity, innovation and the rapid development of economies (Kassean, H. et al., 2015; Warnecke, 2013).

EE can be studied in colleges either on theoretical bases or as a practical class. EE is indispensable and a source of valuable information to students. Therefore, which form of learning EE in universities would have a greater impact on EI? Presently, there exists a lot of economic challenges in nations; increased unemployment rate, low productivity, unfavourable balance of payments and social vices such as increased criminal tendencies especially in Nigeria. More youths, especially fresh graduates should look forward to something positive with the hope to eke out a living through self-employment. The importance of EE cannot be underestimated, as it will be a tool to create EI in the minds of graduates, who will be a great contributing factor to economic growth in the nation. Hence, this study examines the relationship between entrepreneurship education (EE) and entrepreneurship intention (EI).

Theory and Hypothesis Development

This study is anchored in the theory of planned behavior (TPB) based on its relevance to this study. TPB has a robust explanation and insight into a wide range of studies that involves human behaviour in the social and management sciences (McEachan, Conner, Taylor, & Lawton, 2011). Linan and Fayolle (2015) points out that, TPB is the most used theory in studies on entrepreneurship. As this study examines the relationship between EE and EI. Intention is widely generated from the perspective of human behaviour that is first conceived in the mind and planned (Lortie & Castogiovanni, 2015). Actions that are related to the creation of new business requires decision making capabilities of individuals which can be triggered by certain behavioural traits (Kautonen et al., 2015). The TPB bothers on different aspects of an individual's attitude and belief and this can affect how the individual responds to EI. Therefore, TPB refers to the degree to which a person evaluates entrepreneurial behaviour favourably or unfavourably (González et al., 2018).

Theoretical classes of Entrepreneurship Education and Entrepreneurial Intention

EE in many educational institutions build their curriculum to cover the objectives, content design, teaching methods, and student assessment (Fayolle, 2013). The teachings must be highly strategic even when it is being taught theoretically. Universities do more of theoretical teachings than other institutions of higher education. The study of Galloway and Brown (2002) explains that university graduates have a higher potential for business success because of the nature of training to which they have been exposed. EE taught in universities inspires students to pursue an entrepreneurship career to become self-reliant by choosing to become self-employed (Lawan, et al., 2015). Premand, et al., (2016), views that EI can be formed in the minds of students as they are engaged in a classroom teaching. Classroom teachings which are more of a theoretical session educates students with the required knowledge on several ways via which they can develop business idea and the various ways they can begin the establishment of a viable business (Katundu & Gabagambi, 2016). Aspects of the business environment are also being taught to entrepreneurship students in universities, giving them a more holistic approach to business that would make them very valuable contributors to economic development. Pulka, Aminu, and Rikwentishe (2015) focuses out that EE empowers the procurement of entrepreneurial information, abilities, states of mind and practices. Students' demeanor towards business and enterprise instruction can be impacted by their convictions, thought forms, practices, encounters and social environment. As such, students' states of mind towards enterprise and business instruction can be seen in terms of three viewpoints of enterprise state of mind identified by Pulka et al. (2015) as cognitive, affective and behavioural attitude components. Theoretical classes build a cognitive cognitive process that enhances the beliefs, thoughts and knowledge students have about EE which later develops EI in the minds of the students (Amdam, 2011).

Different studies underscore the significant role universities play in the development and sustenance of EE and maintains that concepts relating to EI can be learnt in a university from a knowledgeable lecturer. Entrepreneurial universities would help create skilled people and share knowledge with industries (Iwu, et al., 2021). This study says that universities that teach how to start and run businesses need with the right information, and teachers who know what they are teaching (Iwu, et al., 2021). It's important to know how teaching entrepreneurship can affect someone's desire to become an entrepreneur by promoting creativity. Many studies emphasize this idea (Fayolle & Gailly, 2015; Ferreira, Fernandes, & Ratten, 2017).

Hypothesis one: There is no significant relationship between theoretical classes in Entrepreneurship Education and Entrepreneurial Intention

Practical Classes of Entrepreneurship Education and Entrepreneurship Intention

The practical class is a form entrepreneurship education that translates theoretical knowledge into real world scenario by solving problems by learning. The acquisition of practical knowledge gives a student a clearer perspective of what it entails to become an entrepreneur thereby giving the student better stand to take decision if it is a desirable thing or not desirable. In entrepreneurship training, theoretical training is important, but it is vital that the practical aspect of the training is considered for students to be well impacted and grounded with the required knowledge. Entrepreneurship lecturers need to buoy their lectures with practical problems and make reference to life experiences and profile entrepreneurs to give the students a practical insight into the practical module of entrepreneurship. Daniel et al. (2017) in their study experimented the EI of students by exploring a learning- by-doing approach. The study explained the behaviour of students adopted the learning-by-doing approach with respect to tourism education. The result showed that many of the students became enthusiastic about becoming entrepreneurs in their future endeavors. This form of teaching encourages the engaging of different entrepreneurs, business practitioners, and other stakeholders. The process requires that tutors share their personal experience and also share their personal entrepreneurial behavior to encourage students who have the intention to establish a business in the future (Isenberg, 2010; Nambisan & Baron, 2013). In other to make EE classes to be impactful to students, the curriculum is usually updated regularly, bringing in required changes. Though, traditional teaching styles such as seminars, lectures, business plans are still vital in developing understanding, awareness, and know-how, the need for practice-oriented learning is fundamental for a rich EE (Ndou et al., 2018). Practical classes for EE give a better cognitive assimilation of the study content and this would make student perform with a higher success rate.

Hypothesis two: There is no Significant Relationship between Practical Classes of Entrepreneurship Education and Entrepreneurship Intention

Gender, Entrepreneurship Education and Entrepreneurial Intention

Gender of a student is an important factor to consider in EE as it plays a role in EI. Gonzalez-Serrano, et al. (2019), posits that males have a higher tendency of EI than females, because of their personality that prompts them to take responsibility and risk. Males have a strong mental capacity for self-efficacy. Males have more self-confidence in their ability to network and promote an idea and also to establish a new product and business (do Paco et al., 2015). This explains that males are more confident in their abilities to take initiative to pursue a course of action (Gavurova et al., 2018). Young women on the other hand are less confident in their capabilities to pursue an entrepreneurial project, making them less responsive to develop EI after completing an EE class session (Ndofirepi et al., 2018; Torres & Garcia, 2017). However, Ndou et al. (2019) argued that women entrepreneurship drive can be built up when they are enrolled to an EE class that would encourage and motivate them to become more self-reliant. Females can become self- confident and venture into entrepreneurial projects as they are given the right tools to make them self-reliant (Gutierrez, Perez, & Galicia, 2018). Different studies have focused on finding solutions to improved EE that is beneficial to both male and female students for the purpose of building their skill to be used as a profitable business and enhancing their self-confidence to be more positive in pursuing their dreams (Gavurova, Belas, Kotaskova, & Cepel, 2018).

The effect of gender on EI can be higher in some areas of specialization than in others. In the area of sports, more men dominate entrepreneurial projects than women. Costa et al. (2023), in their research work mentioned that gender plays a significant role in the EI of sports related activities. This is because it can be deduced that more males than females have higher tendency for EI. It is important to note that more effort needs to be exerted to ensure gender equality in the area of entrepreneurship having less women and having male domination due to self-esteem issues that need to be addressed. Therefore, a university-based EE can be of great advantage in addressing gender inequality, using the right curriculum to develop the mental capacity of both male and female students (Vlad et al., 2020).

Hypothesis three: Gender influences Entrepreneurship Education and Entrepreneurial Intention

Methodology

The study adopted a quantitative methodology with analytic descriptive survey design. The population of the study is a total of 534 undergraduate students of the 200 level and 300level entrepreneurship classes in 2020/2021 and 2021/2022 Academic Sessions of the University of Africa, Toru-Orua and Bayelsa Medical University, Yenagoa all in Bayelsa State, Nigeria. A sample of 240 undergraduate students were selected through a stratified sampling procedure.

The data collection instrument was a structured questionnaire designed on a 5-point Likert scale of strongly agree to strongly disagree. The instrument was validated by experts in entrepreneurship education and was pretested to make the necessary corrections to ensuring content validity of the measurement instrument. Further, the reliability of the measurement instrument was ascertained through the application of Cronbach alpha and the coefficients of the subscales were 0.76, 0.86, 0.85 for theoretical entrepreneurship education, practical entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurial intention respectively.

The data for the study were collected by distributing 250 pieces of questionnaires through one-on -one approach and they were retrieved from the students while they concluded their lectures in consideration of the schedule of lectures. The course lecturers were duly informed and assisted by encouraging the students to fill out the data collection instruments. The data collected were analyzed using hierarchical regression analysis and independent samples t-test of significance.

Data Analysis and Results

The results in table 1 below demonstrated the relationship between theorical, practical entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurship intention of undergraduate students in universities. The model summary suggests that the adjusted R square of theoretical entrepreneurship education is 0.24 while the R square for practical entrepreneurship education stood at 0.38. The statistics indicated that 24% and 38% change in student entrepreneurial intention was accounted for by theoretical entrepreneurship education and practical entrepreneurship education respectively. The F ratios for models 1 and 2 are $F = 78.05$, $p < 0.05$ and $F= 51.18$, $p < 0.05$. The statistics of the summary values suggested that the models have good fits. The table two provides the regression coefficients, t-test values and other relevant statistics over the relationship between theoretical entrepreneurship education, practical entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurial intention of undergraduate students in universities. With Model 1, the results indicated that there is a significant relationship between theoretical entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurial intention of undergraduate students ($\beta = 0.49$, $t = 8.83$, $p < 0.05$). The Model II also

demonstrated that there is a significant relationship between practical entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurial intention of undergraduate students ($\beta = 0.78$, $t = 7.15$, $p < 0.05$). Consequently, hypotheses one and two are rejected.

Table 1. Model Summary on Entrepreneurship Education and Entrepreneurial Intention of Undergraduate Students

		Model	
		1	2
R		.497[a]	.617[b]
R Square		.247	.381
Adjusted R Square		.244	.375
Std. Error of the Estimate		.627	.569
Change Statistics	R Square Change	.247	.134
	F Change	78.016	51.188
	df1	1	1
	df2	238	237
	Sig. F Change	.000	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), Theory
b. Predictors: (Constant), Theory, Pract

Source: Data Analysis Output from SPSS version 20.

Table 2: Regression Analysis of Entrepreneurship Education and Entrepreneurial Intention of Undergraduate Students

		Model				
		1		2		
		(Constant)	Theory	(Constant)	Theory	Pract
Unstandardized Coefficients	B	2.056	.433	2.066	-.129	.560
	Std. Error	.184	.049	.167	.090	.078
Standardized Coefficients	Beta		.497		-.148	.741
T		11.201	8.833	12.383	-1.429	7.155
Sig.		.000	.000	.000	.154	.000
95.0% Confidence Interval for B	Lower Bound	1.694	.336	1.737	-.307	.406
	Upper Bound	2.418	.529	2.394	.049	.714
Collinearity Statistics	Tolerance		1.000		.243	.243
	VIF		1.000		4.110	4.110

a. Dependent Variable: Intent

Source: Data Analysis Output from SPSS version 20

From table 3 below, the statistical results show the role of gender to practical, theoretical entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurial intention of undergraduate students in universities. The results indicated that there was a significant difference in perception of between male and female students with respect to theoretical classes and practical classes of entrepreneurial education respectively ($t = 2.28$, $p < 0.05$ and $t = 2.41$, $p < 0.05$) while there is no significant difference in the perception between male and female students with respect to entrepreneurial intention ($t = 1.05$, $p < 0.05$). The result implies that gender influences the theoretical and practical entrepreneurship among undergraduate students while gender does not influence the entrepreneurial intention of students.

Table 3: The Influence of Gender on Entrepreneurship Education and Entrepreneurial Intention

Variables	Gender	N	Mean	T test	P-Value	Decision
Theoretical classes	Male	132	3.76	2.28	0.023	***Reject$H0_1$***
	Female	108	3.52			
Practical Classes	Male	132	3.78	2.41	0.017	***Reject$H0_2$***
	Female	108	3.48			
Intention	Male	132	3.68	1.05	0.293	***Do not reject $H0_3$***
	Female	108	3.58			

Source: Data Analysis Output from SPSS version 20

Discussion of Results

The study investigated the role of entrepreneurship education, gender and entrepreneurial intention of undergraduate students in Nigeria. The finding of the study indicted that theoretical entrepreneurship education positively impacted entrepreneurial intention of undergraduate students in Nigeria. Prior studies supported the findings of the current study that there was a nexus between entrepreneurial education and entrepreneurial intention among undergraduate students in Nigeria (Westhead & Solesvik, 2016; Sun, Liang & Wong, 2017). The finding of the study underscores the critical nature of the classroom approach in imparting entrepreneurial knowledge and values to students in universities to set and manage successful business.

In terms of practical entrepreneurship education, entrepreneurial intention of undergraduate student was positively impacted. The finding of the study suggested that practical classes of entrepreneurship is of critical significance to the intention of undergraduate students to engage in nascent entrepreneurial activities. Nabi et al (2018) study of entrepreneurial education and entrepreneurial intention provided empirical evidence which underpinned the finding of the current study that practical entrepreneurship education impacted the entrepreneurial intention of undergraduate students. Further, the practical approach translates the theoretical foundations into real world situations for setting up and managing business. This involves making decisions under conditions of bounded rationality and the applications of knowledge and business principles acquired

For gender of undergraduate students, the findings demonstrated that gender influenced the mindset of students towards practical and theoretical entrepreneurship education. However, for the evaluation of entrepreneurial intention of undergraduate students, gender did not have a significant influence. The prior findings of Haus et al (2013) and Nowiniski et al (2019) affirmed that gender had a positive influence on entrepreneurial intention of students and this suggests that the prior empirical evidence is inconsistent with findings of the current study that gender had no significant influence on the entrepreneurial intention of undergraduate students and that there was a difference in the entrepreneurial intention of students on the basis of gender.

Practical and Policy Implications

In tandem with the findings that entrepreneurship education is a significant factor that determines the entrepreneurial intention of students, the National University Commission and allied regulatory bodies should design, reenact and reinforce the implementation of entrepreneurship curriculums in business schools, colleges and universities.

Limitations and Direction for Further Studies

The study makes important contributions towards entrepreneurship and education scholarship but not without limitations. The study focused on students in universities in Bayelsa State, this constrains the generalizability of the study. Further studies should examine tertiary institutions in the Niger Delta region. The study collected data at a single point in time, which limits the causation of the variables in the study. Further investigations should consider collecting data in waves to allow for longitudinal design.

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Declaration of Potential Conflicts

We declare that there is no potential conflict to the publication of this manuscript

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