



# Teaching Creativity and Entrepreneurship in Higher Education: An Evaluation of Employability of University Undergraduates in Nigeria

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Received 10 April 2014, Revised 17 August 2014, Accepted 07 November 2014, Published 01 January 2015

**Abstract:** The study investigated the influence of teaching creativity and entrepreneurship on employability of undergraduates and determined the difference in the entrepreneurial abilities to create new ventures amongst undergraduates in University of Lagos, Nigeria. It also determined the relationship between the teaching of creativity and entrepreneurship education on adaptability of university undergraduates to the changing Nigerian economy. These were with the view to improving the quality of entrepreneurship in higher education in the country. The study adopted a mixed research approach combining both descriptive survey and focus group designs. The sample comprised of an intact class of 1108 part 3 undergraduate students who registered for a compulsory course in entrepreneurship and corporate governance in the Rain Semester of 2012/2013 session. The instrument was a questionnaire which measured respondents' ratings of job-relevant skills and elicited suggestions for improving career skills among undergraduates. Data were analyzed using Pearson product moment correlation and One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) at 0.05 level of significance. The results showed that there existed a significant influence of teaching creativity and entrepreneurship on employability of undergraduates, and adaptability to the changing economy. Also, a non-significant difference existed in the entrepreneurial abilities to create new ventures amongst undergraduates in University of Lagos. It was concluded that a practical course involving either hands-on-learning in the classroom or training on-the-job is imperative as a way for undergraduates to learn and continuously update their skills.

**Keywords:** entrepreneur, entrepreneurship, employability, skills, venture creation

## 1. INTRODUCTION

One major aspect of Nigerian education that has been quite often criticized is the higher education curriculum. The early critics include members of the Phelps-Stokes and Advisory Commissions who submitted their separate reports in 1925. They observed that education in Africa, nay Nigeria, generally had not been adapted to the needs and aspirations of the people. In their various reports, the Commissions suggested that the subjects taught in African schools should henceforth be related to African life and culture. It is interesting to note that a few decades after the publication of the Phelps-Stokes and Advisory Committees Reports, particularly after World War II, slight adjustments were made in schools' curriculum which was slightly oriented towards African life. But the progress in this direction

was not remarkable, for as late as the 1960s, education in African schools, particularly in Nigerian Universities, was still "too literary, not practical, not adapted to the needs of a developing agricultural nation," (Adeyinka, 2002). The word of Ajayi and Obidi (2005) is apposite here when they asserted that this type of academic education only "tends to produce proud, lazy people who dislike manual labour and prefer white-collar jobs". This assertion by Ajayi and Obidi (2005) is representative of the opinions of later critics on Nigerian education curricula generally. The flaws in this aspect of Nigerian education have been traced to missionary influence or British colonial rule in Nigeria. The colonial masters placed too much emphasis on civil service and company jobs with little motivation for self employment (Kpee & Lekia, 2011). In a related vein, Akpomi (2009) reported that our educational institution few as they were



remained factories for producing white collar jobbers with no special professional nor was entrepreneurial skill envisaged in the education system. This means that before now, there has been complete absence of enterprise education in the educational system. Matlay and Carey (2007) reported that there are no tools and benchmarks for assessing the quality of entrepreneurship education programmes offered in the tertiary institutions.

Today, all educational authorities in Nigeria are aware of the pressing need to relate our curricula, at all levels of education, to our national man-power needs. Conferences on curriculum development and utterances of renown professors of education and government officials are a proof of the people's awareness of this major flaw in our educational system and of the pressing need for reforms at all levels of education. For example, one of the most recent reforms that have almost become ubiquitous in today's Nigerian universities is the introduction of Entrepreneurial Education and Corporate Governance as a compulsory course in the universities. Since entrepreneurship skills remain vital in the real sector and the sustenance of economic development, it has become imperative for government to pay attention to this sub-sector. The problems facing the country ranging from acute poverty, youth and graduate unemployment, dependence on foreign goods and technology; to very low economic growth and development among others has prompted government's recognition of this fact that has led to the introduction of entrepreneurial studies in tertiary institutions (Osibanjo, 2006).

This study therefore argues that entrepreneurship education will equip the students with the skills with which to be self-reliant.

According to Ojeifo (2012), entrepreneurship education in Nigeria amongst other things seeks to provide students in tertiary institutions with the knowledge, skills and motivation to encourage entrepreneurial success in a variety of ventures. Variations of entrepreneurship education are offered at all levels of schooling in Nigeria, from primary to secondary schools through the graduate university programmes. However, Henry et al., (2003) posed the essential, evergreen question: can entrepreneurship be taught? There certainly continue to be debates on the purpose, goals, values and pedagogies of enterprise education, together with new thinking. Lewis (2011) concluded that entrepreneurship struggled to gain academic legitimacy at a moral, pedagogical and theoretical level, with the quality and focus of research being constraints. Controversially, she asserted that the unresolved tension of the twin goals of enabling students to become entrepreneurs or to understand and operate within an enterprising society, together with an over-dependence on government policy initiatives, have prevented this legitimacy. Blenker et al., (2011) proposed

a progression from existing paradigms of education to a new one of 'facilitating entrepreneurship as everyday practice' and, like Lewis, saw the development of 'an entrepreneurial mindset' being an outcome of the educational process.

Jones (2011) argued the importance of entrepreneurship education being underpinned by an explicit teaching philosophy grounded on student learning, whilst Jones and Matlay (2011) developed a conceptual framework centred on the student and their dialogic relationships with educator, institution, educational processes and community. Emergent issues and challenges facing educators were reported by Carey and Matlay (2012), whilst Rae (2010) proposed that a 'new era' of responsible entrepreneurship and related education was required to address the failures of market capitalistic entrepreneurship which contributed to the financial crises of 2008-2011. These and other debates inform the intellectually diverse space of entrepreneurship education and educators, into which the survey, as an instrumental and relatively simplistic device, attempted to measure provision and assess the effectiveness of entrepreneurship education policy.

Concomitant with this belief, the viewpoint is generally held that the stimulating innovative and growth-oriented entrepreneurship is a key economic and societal challenge to which universities and colleges have much to contribute. Thus, the need to examine the role that higher education institutions in Nigeria are currently playing through teaching entrepreneurship and transferring knowledge and innovation to enterprises. It is clear that entrepreneurship engagement is a rapidly expanding and evolving aspect of higher education that requires proper support and development. Therefore, the move by the government through the Federal Ministry of Education to make entrepreneurship education one of the compulsory general studies for students in universities across the country should be seen as a positive step in the right direction. This is to inculcate in the youths the spirit of self reliance. This development will not only address the problem of unemployment and underemployment but will also ensure an entrepreneurial human capacity for national development. It is the hope that with the introduction of entrepreneurial education in our tertiary institutions the universities will better be repositioned to become centres of excellence with the equipping of technical laboratories both at secondary and tertiary levels. This will put the country on the path to join communities of nations that have fought poverty through strengthening of small scale businesses.

Over time, the Nigerian economy has depended significantly on oil revenues. However in the recent years, the country has been trying to diversify away from dependence on oil by setting an ambitious goal. The country wants to increasingly globalize education



through information and communication technology, and entrepreneurship. The role of entrepreneurship in economic growth and development cannot be over emphasised especially with regard to job creation and poverty reduction. Over the years, there have been many entrepreneurship programmes delivered to tackle the problem of unemployment by supporting Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) in Nigeria. The programmes initiated by Directorate of Employment (NDE), Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN), National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) have helped in creating jobs. However, unemployment persists in the country. The rate of unemployment compared with the number of SMEs in the country shows that the SMEs are yet to grow and to create enough jobs in spite of their potentials to do this. Against this background however, it is anticipated that this research will contribute to supporting and informing future curriculum developments in enterprise and entrepreneurship. Based on this premise, this study sought to establish the direction of the pull and push of the teaching of creativity and entrepreneurship education on employability, entrepreneurial abilities, and adaptability to the changing Nigerian economy among university undergraduates of the University of Lagos, Nigeria. Towards this end, three hypotheses were generated for the study namely:

1. There is no significant influence of teaching creativity and entrepreneurship on employability of undergraduates in University of Lagos.
2. There is no significant difference in the entrepreneurial abilities to create new ventures amongst undergraduates in University of Lagos.
3. There is no significant relationship between the teaching of creativity and entrepreneurship education on adaptability of undergraduates to the changing Nigerian economy.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

The research is an exploratory study adopting a mixed research approach combining both survey and focus group research designs. A survey research design allows for the collection of quantifiable data from a sample to explain a particular phenomenon (Upadhy and Singh, 2008). The focus group can highlight the diversity of perspectives and discovers underlying attitudes, but Anderson and Arsenault (1998) reminds us that focus groups must have a clear idea of purpose and must be skillfully planned and facilitated. In this case the purpose is to get students views of their learning experiences thus far on the 'Entrepreneurship and Corporate Governance' course, and to try to ascertain whether they consider the activities they have been involved in have helped them to become more enterprising.

All undergraduate students who registered for a compulsory course in 'Entrepreneurship and Corporate Governance' during the Harmattan Semester of 2012/2013 Session in the Faculty of Education of the University of Lagos, Yaba-Akoka, Lagos State, Nigeria, constituted the target population for the study. There were 1108 undergraduate students who registered for the course during the session. The sample consisted of an intact class of 1108 part 3 undergraduate students who registered for GST 307: Entrepreneurship and Corporate Governance in Harmattan Semester of 2012/2013 session. Thus, the entire population was therefore used and no sampling was carried out. Two research instruments were used in the study namely: "Undergraduate Entrepreneurship Skills Questionnaire (UESQ)" (Ibrahim & Olatunde, 2012) and Viva-voce interview. The "Undergraduate Entrepreneurship Skills Questionnaire (UESQ)", is a 30-item self-developed questionnaire which was used to collect data for the study. It consists of four sections. Section A seeks demographic information such as name of respondent, sex, age, level of university education, course of study and department. Section B has items that measure the quality of teaching creativity and entrepreneurship. Section C has items that elicit information on entrepreneurial capabilities. Section D measures the adaptability of undergraduates to the changing Nigerian economy. The qualitative data was collected via focus groups. Upadhy and Singh (2008) pointed out that if the researcher is genuinely concerned with exploring the views and experiences of the participants in the study then the mechanisms he/she uses must allow for this and encourage it. Therefore the use of focus groups, in addition to the questionnaires, is deemed appropriate. Most of the items in the questionnaire were developed using the course content of GST 307: Entrepreneurship and Corporate Governance and were validated by the researchers by administering the instrument on 60 respondents, who were not participants in the study but undergraduates in Lagos State University, Ojo, Lagos, Nigeria, who were also offering the same course with similar course content. Their responses were analyzed to determine Cronbach's Alpha and internal consistency reliabilities. The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient obtained was 0.81, indicating a high internal consistency. Also, Spearman Brown Split-half reliability coefficient was 0.76. These co-efficient values were acceptable as appropriately high for study of human behaviour due to its complexity. Consequently, the instrument was accepted as being stable over time hence its usage in this study. The hard copies of the questionnaires were administered on the respondents by the researchers with the assistance of the course lecturers of GST 307 in their respective lecture rooms and all the copies distributed were collected. Also, adequate time was provided for



respondents to respond to all the items. By this method, 1108 questionnaires administered were returned correctly filled and used for analysis. The data obtained for this study to test the hypotheses were analysed with the use of Pearson product moment correlation and One-Way Analysis of Variance statistical methods using updated SPSS version 17.0. All hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

### 3. RESULTS

**Hypothesis 1:** There is no significant influence of teaching creativity and entrepreneurship on employability of undergraduates in University of Lagos. The results of the analysis are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1: Relationship between the influence of teaching creativity and entrepreneurship on employability of undergraduates**

Variables	N	Mean Scores	SD	MD	Df	r-cal	r-critical
Teaching of creativity/ entrepreneurship	1108	24.30	6.39				
Undergraduates' employability	1108	23.70	5.52	0.60	1106	0.62*	0.062

\*Significant,  $p < 0.05$

Table 1 reveals that the calculated r-value of 0.62 is significant since it is greater than the critical r-value of 0.062 given 1106 degree of freedom at 0.05 level of significance. Consequently, the research hypothesis was retained, which implies that there is a significant

influence of teaching creativity and entrepreneurship on employability of undergraduates in University of Lagos.

**Hypothesis 2:** There is no significant difference in the entrepreneurial abilities to create new ventures amongst undergraduates in University of Lagos. The results of the analysis are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2: One-way ANOVA on Difference in entrepreneurial abilities to create new ventures among undergraduates**

Variables	N	$\bar{x}$	SD	
High ability	275	20.34	2.17	
Moderate ability	354	20.17	2.06	
Low ability	479	18.93	2.36	
Sources of Variance	Sum of squares	Degrees of freedom	Mean of squares	F-ratio
Between Groups	120.8	2	60.4	1.52(ns)
Within groups (Error)	43826.9	1105	39.66	
Total	43947.7	1107		

NS= Not Significant,  $(F(2,1105) = 1.52, p > 0.05; \text{Critical } F = 2.99$

Table 2 shows that undergraduate students with high ability of creativity statistically significantly manifested high entrepreneurial traits ( $\bar{x} = 20.34$ ), followed by those with moderate ability ( $\bar{x} = 20.17$ ), while those with low ability had statistically significantly the lowest manifestation of entrepreneurial traits ( $\bar{x} = 18.93$ ). One-way Analysis of Variance statistic was used thereafter to determine whether these mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) scores were significantly different. The result of the analysis showed that a calculated F-value of 1.52 resulted as the difference in entrepreneurial abilities due to undergraduate students' creativity. This calculated F-value was insignificant

since it is less than the critical F-value of 2.99 given 2 and 1105 degrees of freedom at 0.05 level of significance. This led to the retention of the null hypothesis which stated that there was no significant difference in the entrepreneurial abilities to create new ventures amongst undergraduates in University of Lagos.

**Hypothesis 3:** There is no significant relationship between the teaching of creativity and entrepreneurship education on adaptability of undergraduates to the changing Nigerian economy. The results of the analysis are presented in Table 3.



**Table 3: Relationship between the teaching of creativity and entrepreneurship education and undergraduates' adaptability**

Variables	N	Mean Scores	SD	MD	Df	r-cal	r-critical
Teaching of creativity/ entrepreneurship	1108	24.30	6.39				
Undergraduates' adaptability	1108	24.08	6.42	0.22	1106	0.43*	0.062

\* Significant,  $p < 0.05$

Table 3 indicates that the calculated r-value of 0.43 is significant since it is greater than the critical r-value of 0.062 given 1106 degree of freedom at 0.05 level of significance. Consequently, the research hypothesis was upheld, which implies that there is a significant relationship between the teaching of creativity and entrepreneurship education on adaptability of undergraduates to the changing Nigerian economy.

#### 4. DISCUSSION

In this study, the findings revealed that there was a significant interaction between the teachings of creativity, entrepreneurship education, employability, and adaptability of undergraduates to the changing Nigerian economy. This shows that success in the labour market does not only depend on the acquisition of entrepreneurial skills but also is an important determinant of employment dynamics and earnings later in life. A pattern that seems to emerge is that as economies develop and diversify the demand for higher-level cognitive skills increases relative to the demands for manual job-specific skills. The importance of behavioural or non-cognitive skills should not be underestimated. This is because both behavioural and cognitive skills are needed by would be employee to succeed on the job. In many economies, employers are searching for workers who possess behavioural skills such as teamwork, diligence, creativity, and entrepreneurship. Skill-building systems will also need the capacity to improve behavioural attributes (Ojeifo, 2012).

Among the myriad factors contributing to this market failure, one stands out namely a profound disconnection between the perceptions variously held by employers, education-providers and the young themselves. Thus, one of the biggest problems facing Nigeria as a country in 2013 is the prolonged and seemingly intractable crisis of youth unemployment. Put simply, too many young people lack employable skills in a world that has too few skilled workers (Olujide, 2013). If young graduates who have played by society's rules,

working hard, for example, to graduate from school and university, find fewer and fewer opportunities to secure decent jobs and the sense of respect that comes with them, society will have to be prepared for outbreaks of anger or even violence. The evidence is already there in the riots that have recently scarred America, Britain, Chile, Egypt, Italy and Spain, to name but a few. The result is that even though the economy is said to have recorded a growth rate of about 7 per cent, it has created few or no jobs, leading to an all-time high unemployment records. Whereas official figures put unemployment rate at 24 per cent, there are indicators to believe that the actual estimate could be as high as 60 per cent or higher. Nearly all of our employable youths remain unemployed, constituting a veritable army of the hungry, disillusioned and angry with great potential for undermining the peace and security of the nation. The findings of this study is in line with Gollin (2002) and Banerjee & Duflo (2008) who in their separate discoveries reported that receiving business training significantly increased the probability that training participants would start a business or expand an existing business. More education boosts productivity. But education needs, not only to expand, but also to be relevant, of sufficient quality and available to a broad swath of society.

Another finding of this study revealed that there was no significant difference in the entrepreneurial abilities to create new ventures amongst undergraduates of the University of Lagos. A likely reason for this finding obviously is that GST 307: Entrepreneurship and Corporate Governance course aim is to foster enterprising attributes, not to produce entrepreneurs. The course is practical as well as academic but has not achieved its aims in terms of helping students develop enterprise skills. Until now, we have only anecdotal evidence (i.e. field reports) of the success of our students. The forthcoming review of this programme has provided the impetus for much needed research into its effectiveness in achieving our stated aims, hence this research.



This finding is in consonance with earlier ones which alluded that it was possible to encourage students' entrepreneurial or enterprising attributes by adopting a focus for learning that would look to the future rather than look back to the past, aim for creativity rather than critical analysis, insight rather than knowledge and promote active learning rather than passive understanding (Bridge, O'Neill & Cromie, 1998). Some (Henry et al., 2003) argue that entrepreneurial capabilities are not inborn and as such entrepreneurship is a behavioural not a personality trait but can be learned. All the same, the attempts at stimulating entrepreneurial activities through formal training and education and therefore assume that they may be enhanced or developed by a guided entrepreneurial education. Others (Blenker et al., 2011) believe that entrepreneurship is inborn, that is, personality trait not behavioural. There are yet others (Kpee & Lekia, 2011) including these researchers who believe that entrepreneurship is primarily learned by experience and discovery and that entrepreneurial learning should be conceived as a lifelong process, where knowledge is continuously shaped and revised as new experience take place (Lewis, 2001).

## 5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

On the basis of the findings for this study, it is concluded that there existed a significant interaction between the teachings of creativity, entrepreneurship education, employability, and adaptability of undergraduates to the changing Nigerian economy. It is also concluded that there was no significant difference in the entrepreneurial abilities to create new ventures amongst undergraduates in the universities. Hence, the following recommendations are proffered for effective entrepreneurship education in Nigerian universities namely: all stakeholders must encourage the proposed introduction of Entrepreneurship study across faculties and departments as general courses in the country. The federal government in collaboration with state governments should provide scholarships/bursaries for performing students by way of encouragement. Universities should start to commercialize their research findings instead of leaving them in the shelves. The National Universities Commission (NUC) should as usual set the minimum benchmark of the courses in Nigerian universities. This development should not be politicized, rather, the entire policy frameworks needed for its sustainability and improvement should be provided so as to salvage Nigeria from clutches of poverty.

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