

ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATOR'S COMPETENCE ON UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' COMMITMENT TO LEARNING AND BUSINESS PLAN WRITING

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this research was to examine the role of an educator's competence in enhancing students' commitment to write business plans as expression of entrepreneurial aspirations and intentions. The data for this study was collected from university students of four selected institutions in Nigeria offering a degree programme in entrepreneurship. The selected universities are Joseph Ayo Babalola in Osun State, Federal University of Agriculture in Abeokuta Ogun State, Federal University of Technology Akure Ondo State, and Lead City University Ibadan Oyo State. This study adopted descriptive cross sectional survey research design in which the research questionnaire was administered to participants based on purposive, stratified and simple random sampling techniques. A total of six hundred (600) students from the selected universities participated in this study. In developing the survey questionnaire instrument, questions were adapted from existing literature that relate to the study. Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analysis was used in validating the hypothesis postulated in the study using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22. The findings from the analysis implied that the experience and skill of an entrepreneurship educator impacts on entrepreneurship students' commitment to learning particularly in writing feasible and viable business plans. It was recommended that entrepreneurship educators should ensure to utilize their experience and skill to motivate students' commitment to entrepreneurial related learning with particular emphasis on business plan writing. This is hinged upon the fact that angel investors, partnering financial institutions and other stakeholder support systems mostly favor business plan competitions as basis for supporting business start-ups.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship Education, Educator's Competence, Commitment to Learning, Business Plan Writing.

INTRODUCTION

An educator's competence is a decisive factor regarding the development of entrepreneurship education initiatives (Hytti & O'Gorman, 2004). This suggests that the competence of an educator cannot be overemphasised particularly because practical business skills and experience are required to inculcate entrepreneurial skills in students. Business planning as an entrepreneurial activity involves the totality of the entrepreneurship process, hence it is still considered as an important aspect of entrepreneurship education and training

(Albornoz-Pardo, 2013). A business plan creates diverse scenarios that may affect a business, thus its development requires an accurate analysis in order to transform business ideas and opportunities into successful businesses. Although, some studies such as Honig (2004), Bhide (2001) and Sarasvathy (2008) have criticised the business plan method of teaching entrepreneurship, nevertheless business plan competitions are increasingly becoming a popular option for partnering financial institutions, organizations, individuals, angel investors as well as venture capitalists as an opportunity to stimulate entrepreneurship development among start-up entrepreneurs and university graduates. This is premised on the fact that writing a business plan is considered as an expression of entrepreneurial intentions (Honig & Karlsson, 2004; White, Hertz & D'Souza, 2011). This suggests that the experience and training of an educator in this aspect is very important and decisive for students' commitment to learn and write business plans. Fiet (2000) looked at the role of the educator in entrepreneurship education generally; other studies such as Shulman and Shulman (2004) stressed the role of practical business experience and training of entrepreneurship educators in motivating considerations of entrepreneurship as a career by university students. However, considering the role of business planning activities in inculcating entrepreneurship skills in learners, the objective of this research was to examine the role of an educator's competence in enhancing students' commitment to write business plans as expression of entrepreneurial aspirations and intentions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Concept of Entrepreneurship

Ejere and Tende (2012) defined entrepreneurship as the willingness and the ability of a business minded individual to identify the areas of needs of people, look for resources to match these needs, combine these resources in the most optimum way, bears the un-insurable risk and established a successful and profitable venture. It is the process of creating something new by devoting the necessary time and efforts while taking the financial and social risks to obtain the rewards. According to Aruwa (2004), entrepreneurship is the ability of some people to accept risk and combine factors of production in order to produce goods and services. It can also be seen as the willingness and ability of an individual to seek out investment opportunities in an environment and be able to establish on the identified opportunities. This is in line with the view Selvarajah and Meyer (2011) who opined that entrepreneurship is the willingness and ability of an individual, a firm or an organization to identify an environmental change and exploit such an opportunity to produce goods and services for public consumption.

Concept of Entrepreneurship Education

Entrepreneurship education is a purposeful intervention by an educator in the life of the learner to impact entrepreneurial qualities and skills to enable the learner to survive in the world of business. Neck and Greene (2011) stated that entrepreneurship education is made up of all kinds of experiences that give students the ability and vision of how to access and transform opportunities of different kinds. It goes beyond business creation. It is about increasing student's ability to anticipate and respond to societal changes. According to Nkala and Wanjau (2013) entrepreneurship education is a catalyst for economic development and job creation in any society. Entrepreneurship education is therefore seen as that type of education fashioned out to prepare learners for innovative ventures which lead to self-reliance and economic emancipation.

It seeks to provide students with the knowledge, skills and motivation to encourage entrepreneurship success at various settings.

Entrepreneurship Educator

Hytti and O'Gorman (2004) defined an entrepreneurship educator as one who possesses vision, and the ability to be both open and accommodating to new ideas and also think laterally and critically about subjects and issues. Van der, Klink and Boon (2002) described an entrepreneurship educator as one with a novel role and task, to lead and provide guidance for their students. Shulman and Shulman (2004) argued that entrepreneurship educators must have an unbiased disposition and orientation, especially with respect to the ways in which parents, businesses, students and other stakeholders, ought to be engaged in entrepreneurship education. According to Schwartz (2006) being entrepreneurial as a teacher means to be flexible, and to push the limits with respect to recognised criteria within education. Generally, the entrepreneurial teacher is considered as someone who pays ardent attention to identifying a good idea and putting it to innovative and creative use (Shulman & Shulman, 2004; Schwartz, 2006).

Business Planning

Zuckerman (2004) described a business plan as a comprehensive written report of the goals of the business, which includes discussion of the business concept, operational plan, marketing plan, financial issues, organisational structure, and legal requirements. According to Svatko (1988) a business plan serves as a road map that charts the course of the starting point, direction, and destination of a business. Baker, Addams and Davis (1993) argued that business plans are not only employed by start-up companies but also existing businesses. Perry (2001) and Hormozi, Sutton, McMinn and Lucio (2002) emphasised that the use of business plans enhances the chances of survival and success of businesses and also to minimize the possibilities of failure. Furthermore, Schamp and Deschoolmeester (1998) and Armstrong (2001) opined that the true objective of a business plan is to infuse appropriate attitudes and motivations into entrepreneurs which have implications for business growth. Brinckmann, Grichnik and Kapsa (2010) described business planning as a process that involves the intentions and actions that an entrepreneur envisions in order to guarantee the survival, prosperity, and growth of a business.

Delmar and Shane (2004) argued that if a business requires investment capital from financial institutions, angel investors or venture capitalists, a well written business plan communicates an entrepreneur's intentions and it is usually a pre-requisite to obtain any loan for such purpose. Similarly, Honig and Karlsson (2004) stated that communicating the intentions of the entrepreneur through a business plan usually involves mapping out the competition, analysing the industry fit and the identifying the target market among other functions. However, White, Hertz and D'Souza (2011) opined that for smaller businesses that function in a fairly stable business environment, the planning process may be an informal review of specific key aspects of business performance by the entrepreneur. Beyond these purposes, Honig and Karlsson (2004) argued that a business plan can have diverse objectives that correlate with the plans and intentions of an entrepreneur. Brinckmann, Grichnik and Kapsa (2010) explained that a business plan has various uses particularly regarding relationships with important parties outside a business. This was supported by Delmar and Shane (2004) who argued that a business plan can be used to inform and educate external parties regarding the objectives, structure and potential

performance of an enterprise and by formalizing intentions in a business plan, a business and an entrepreneur can motivate commitment to action.

Commitment to Learning

Norman (1985) defined commitment to learning as the degree to which an individual values and promotes learning which is salient to the development of the individual. Perin, Sampaio, Barcellos and Kugler (2010) posited that an individual committed to learning would consider learning as a major investment crucial to his/her survival, hence the more value an individual places on learning, the likelihood of the occurrence of learning. Slater and Narver (1994) suggested that commitment to learning is closely associated with long term strategic orientation, in the sense that a short-term investment on learning could yield long-term gains in the context of the performance expected from students as a result of exposure to entrepreneurship education. Consequently, Dirk, Benson and Bruce (2013) argued that if exposure to an entrepreneurship programme fails to motivate or encourage the development of knowledge, the result will be expressed as lack of interest by students in pursuit of learning activities. This suggests that entrepreneurship education can enhance student commitment to learning which may also culminate into intentions for venturing into entrepreneurship as a career (Dirk, Benson & Bruce, 2013; Moses, Olokundun, Akinbode, Agboola and Inelo, 2016)

Entrepreneurship Educator's Competence, Commitment to Learning and Business Plan Writing

Schulman and Schulman (2004) posited that the success of entrepreneurship education demands for competent entrepreneurship educators. This means that an educator's competence is an important factor to ensure students' commitment to entrepreneurial related learning. In support of this, European Commission (2008) argued that entrepreneurship teachers play a vital role because the encouragement and motivation of entrepreneurial attitudes and behaviour is hinged on educators' experience and training. Honig (2004) asserted that business plans are promoted by educational and governmental institutions, financial institutions and investors. Hytti and O'Gorman (2004) argued that business plan writing is regarded as a popular skill building activity employed to teach entrepreneurship, because it requires an understanding of the processes and activities of entrepreneurship. In the same vein, business plan writing is a popular outcome of university entrepreneurship programme in Nigeria (Gibb, 2005). Considering the important role of an entrepreneurship educator in achieving the goals of an entrepreneurship programme, it implies that the competence of an entrepreneurship educator, in Nigerian universities can influence the commitment and skill of students to write feasible business plans as expression of considerations of entrepreneurship as a future career. (Gibb, 2005).

Based on this background the researchers postulated the following hypothesis in null form;

H1: Entrepreneurship educator's competence does not motivate students' commitment to learning and business plan writing

METHODOLOGY

The data for this study was collected from university students of four selected institutions in Nigeria offering a degree programme in entrepreneurship. The selected universities are Joseph Ayo Babalola in Osun State, Federal University of Agriculture in Abeokuta Ogun State, Federal University of Technology Akure Ondo State and Lead City University Ibadan Oyo State. This study adopted descriptive cross sectional survey research design in which the research questionnaire was administered to participants based on purposive, stratified and simple random sampling techniques. A total of six hundred (600) students from the selected universities participated in this study. In developing the survey questionnaire instrument, questions were adapted from existing literature that relate to the study. The validity and reliability of the research instruments was analyzed using content validity and Cronbach Alpha Reliability Procedure. Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analysis was used in validating the hypothesis postulated in the study using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22.

Validity and Reliability Procedures

To ensure content validity experts on the subject matter of this study were provided with access to the measurement tool in order to provide feedback on the effectiveness of each question in measuring the constructs (Ghauri & Gronhaug, 2002). Informed decisions were made based on their feedbacks. The test to determine the internal consistency of the research instrument was conducted on the retrieved questionnaire with the aid of the Cronbach Alpha Reliability procedure (Table 1).

Table 1	
RELIABILITY STATISTICS	
Cronbach's Alpha	No. of Items
0.856	40

Source: Field work (2016)

The result indicated that the instrument had a good internal consistency based on the Cronbach Alpha Coefficient value reported at 0.856.

HYPOTHESES TESTING AND RESULTS

Hierarchical Multiple Regression

H₄: Educator's competence does not impact on students' commitment for writing business plans.

Regression

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	Df1	Df2	Sig. F Change
1	0.181a	0.033	0.031	0.89881	0.033	18.962	1	563	0.000
2	0.349b	0.122	0.118	0.85721	0.089	56.959	1	562	0.000

Source: Field Survey Result (2016)

a. Predictors: (Constant), comptenc

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The test of hypothesis four was to assess the effects of an entrepreneurship educator’s competence and students’ commitment to learning and business plan writing (Table 2). In the first step, the effect of educator’s competence on students’ business plan writing was examined. The R-Square value is the degree of variation of the dependent variable, which can be predicted by the independent variable. Therefore, the analysis revealed that educator’s competence explained 3.3% variance in students’ business plan writing ($R^2=0.033$, $F(2, 563)=18.962$, $p<0.05$). In the second step, the mediating role of commitment to learning was examined. The analysis showed that commitment to learning was able to predict 12.2% variance in students’ business plan writing, over and beyond the effects of teaching methods in entrepreneurship ($R^2=0.122$, $F(1, 562)=56.959$, $p<0.05$).

The significance of the F-change was assessed and it was significant (0.000).

	Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	15.319	1	15.319	18.962	0.000 ^a
	Residual	545.821	563	0.808		
	Total	470.140	564			
2	Regression	57.173	2	28.587	38.903	0.000 ^b
	Residual	412.966	562	0.735		
	Total	470.140	564			

a. Predictors: (Constant), comptenc

b. Predictors: (Constant), comptenc, comtmnt

c. Dependent Variable: buzplan
sSource: Field Survey Result (2016)

Table 3 above shows the results of the two models. The first model showed the effect of educator's competence on business plan writing. The F-value is calculated as the Mean Square Regression (15.319) divided by the Mean Square Residual (0.808), yielding $F=18.962$. From this results, model 1 in the table is statistically significant ($Sig=0.000$). The second model examined the educator's competence and commitment to learning on students' business plan writing. The F-value is calculated as the Mean Square Regression (28.587) divided by the Mean Square Residual (0.735), yielding $F=38.903$ at an acceptable significant level of .000. Since the results of the ANOVA in Table 4 show a significant level of 0.000, the alternate hypothesis which states that 'entrepreneurship educator's competence motivates students commitment to learning and business plan writing' is therefore accepted, while the null hypothesis which states that 'entrepreneurship educator's competence does not motivate students commitment to learning and business plan writing' is rejected.

Table 4 below shows the contributions of the independent and mediating variables to the variance in the dependent variable and their levels of significance.

Table 4 COEFFICIENTS^A (EDUCATOR'S COMPETENCE AND COMMITMENT TO LEARNING)											
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.	Correlations			Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Zero-order	Partial	Part	Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	3.273	0.165		19.857	0.000					
	Comptenc	0.173	0.040	0.181	4.355	0.000	0.181	0.181	0.181	1.000	1.000
2	(Constant)	1.848	0.246		7.521	0.000					
	Comptenc	0.086	0.040	0.090	2.176	0.000	0.181	0.091	0.086	0.916	1.092
	Comtmnt	0.432	0.057	0.312	7.547	0.000	0.338	0.303	0.298	0.916	1.092
a. Dependent Variable: buzplan Source: Field Survey Result (2016)											

Based on the results in model 2, the table above revealed the contributions of educator's competence and students' commitment to learning and business plan writing and their levels of significance (comptenc; $\beta=0.086$; $t=2.176$; $p<0.05$, comtmnt; $\beta=0.432$; $t=7.547$; $p<0.05$).

Decision

The significance levels of all the variables are less than 0.05 and the level of significance of F change is also less than 0.05 (0.000). Based on the results above, it is therefore justified that the alternate hypothesis should be accepted while the null hypothesis should be rejected. It can therefore be concluded that educator's competence impacts on students' commitment to learning and business plan writing.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Findings from Hypothesis Four showed that entrepreneurship educator's competence impacts on students' commitment for writing business plans as evidence of intentions for an entrepreneurial pursuit. This finding implied that the experience and skill of an entrepreneurship educator impacts on entrepreneurship students' commitment to learning particularly in writing feasible and viable business plans. This finding was in agreement with the research of Arasti Falavarjani and Imanipour (2012), who were of the opinion that students' effectiveness in writing business plans can only be achieved based on the teacher's skill and knowledge of teaching methods in entrepreneurship education. This also aligns with the findings of the study of McGing (2016) who reported that business planning in tertiary education is paramount in entrepreneurship education in order to encourage students to be more proactive in the full business cycle. This finding is also in agreement with the result of White Hertz and D'Souza (2014) that business plan writing is one of the most important elements in sound entrepreneurship education and it requires effective teaching and teacher's competence.

On the contrary, studies such Hindle and Mainprize (2006) have questioned the credibility of business plans arguing that new scenarios are constantly evolving and uncertainties may be difficult to ascertain. As a teaching method, Honig (2004) and Bhide (2000) have also criticised the business plan method of teaching entrepreneurship. Honig (2004) asserted that the use of business plans to educate entrepreneurs has received much criticism on the basis that it restricts learners from thinking outside the box and constrains the range of activities and possible solutions pursued by nascent entrepreneurs. However, despite the pitfalls alluded to the business plan method of teaching entrepreneurship, Hindle and Mainprize (2006) argued that business plans are still a popular option for teaching students, because they are a tool for conceptualisation and development of ideas. In the same vein, Price and Meyers (2006) explained that business plans are very important because at the very least, a good business plan reduces the odds of failure. Therefore, the competence of an entrepreneurship educator is very important in this light to motivate students' commitment to learning and business plan writing. Therefore, this study concludes that the experience and skill of entrepreneurship educators in the selected Nigerian universities, impact on entrepreneurship students' commitment to learning, particularly as regards writing business plans.

Recommendations

Entrepreneurship educators should ensure to utilize their experience and skill to motivate students' commitment to entrepreneurial related learning with particular emphasis on business plan writing. This is hinged upon the fact that angel investors, partnering financial institutions and other stakeholder support systems mostly favor business plan competitions as basis for supporting business start-ups.

More emphasis should be laid on training and re-training of entrepreneurship educators on the peculiarity and modalities involved in delivery of entrepreneurship modules and courses. The entrepreneurial experience possessed by entrepreneurship educators notwithstanding, effective teaching particularly with regards to entrepreneurship courses delivery, may pose a challenge as a consequence of lack of training. Therefore, university authorities can partner with training organisations to provide 'training the trainer' programmes or certifications on entrepreneurship modules or courses such as business plan writing. Teachers' competence could

also be enhanced by having the opportunity to work on regional businesses -prior to their teaching service.

A model of exercises examining the variety of topics involved in the business planning process should be adopted. This approach is useful in understanding the specific tasks and learning outcomes involved in business plan development. It can also serve as a guide for entrepreneurship educators to properly comprehend the manner in which various components of business plan development should be taught. It is important to note that students can learn the processes involved in writing a business plan more easily when they practice the activities and processes involved, rather than just learning facts about them.

Entrepreneurship educators can examine students as they engage in the learning activities involved in business plan writing and also encourage them to employ higher level cognitive processes. This will help to make these experiences more meaningful and shun the propensity for students to go through the learning processes just to complete academic assignments. Entrepreneurship educators should ensure that students are creating business plans for real ventures rather than just developing them only to satisfy the requirements of the class, without intention for business start-up.

Entrepreneurial excursions should be organized for university students with a focus on profitable entrepreneurial sectors in Nigeria such as; oil, communication, agriculture, manufacturing and real estate sectors. This will expose students to the current trends in these sectors and also enhance the identification of market gaps. This will reinforce the feasibility and viability of business plans written by students. The learning outcomes of these reforms in entrepreneurship teaching can motivate business start-ups and creation of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) by university students especially at graduation.

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