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Students' Perception of Entrepreneurship Education in Shaping Entrepreneurial Intention in Colleges of Education in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT- Entrepreneurship education has emerged as a key intervention in combating graduate unemployment and fostering innovation in developing economies. The study investigated perception towards entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurial intention among Nigeria's Colleges of Education. Descriptive survey research design was employed, and 239 students' sample was selected by the multi-stage sampling techniques from four colleges in the North-Central geo-political region. A Cronbach Alpha value of 0.84 for an expert-validated researcher questionnaire was used to collect data. Descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) assisted in answering research questions, while independent t-tests were used for hypothesis testing at a 0.05 level of significance. Findings validated that students had favorable perception towards entrepreneurship education, appreciating its relevance and trainers' competency, but concern was noted regarding insufficient realistic experiences and appropriate curriculum content for experiential business skills. Neither gender nor ownership by institution (state or federal) recorded any effect in terms of perception. Outcomes establish that students value entrepreneurship education but need experiential practices to develop entrepreneurial intention. The study recommended that colleges incorporate more entrepreneurship content with experiential projects, internship, and industry interaction.

KEYWORDS: Entrepreneurship Education, Entrepreneurial Intention, Perception, Colleges of Education, Nigeria

I. INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurship has emerged as a core feature in economic development strategies globally due to its ability to create jobs, promote innovation and spur inclusive growth [1], [2]. In both advanced and emerging economies, entrepreneurship is seen less as a pathway to individual wealth creation; rather its value lies in the role it can play in transforming the economy structurally whilst supporting society's capacity for resilience [3]. In countries such as Nigeria where there is an alarming rate of youth unemployment, entrepreneurship has emerged as a relic that would be strategically used to channel the youthful energy and aspirations from non-productive ventures into productive activities capable not only of creating jobs but also searching for them [4]. Actually, despite the abundance of human resource in Nigeria, graduate unemployment is rampant.

The first quarter of 2023 recorded more than 2.8 million graduate unemployed persons [4], a figure which serves to emphasize the urgent need for innovative policy responses. The Nigerian traditional education system has hitherto been oriented towards gaining theoretical knowledge, in line with preparing students for formal employment and not entrepreneurial skills for enterprise purposes or self-employment objectives [5]. This proficiency emphasis has, unintentionally, further entrenched growing misalignment between the skill profiles of graduates and the requirements of the labour market, perpetuating reliance on few government positions and an over-crowded private sector.

In response, the Nigerian government, via institutions such as the National Universities Commission (NUC) and the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE), evolved entrepreneurship education as a core element of the tertiary level of education [6]. Entrepreneurship education is designed to foster entrepreneurial knowledge, attitudes, and skills that result in self-reliance, innovation, and resilience [7]. It is especially important in Colleges of Education since these colleges educate those teachers who will lead the career development and skill-acquisition process of the generations to come.

With the inclusion of entrepreneurship education in teacher training, Nigeria aims to achieve a multiplier effect on entrepreneurial attitude formation at various levels of education. However, although these policy aspirations exist, a number of problems continue to weaken realization of entrepreneurship education objectives. Most students view entrepreneurial courses as supplementary or tangential to their professional interests, viewing them as graduation requirements and not serious pathways to entrepreneurial livelihoods [8]. Other research indicates that much of the curriculum in most of the Colleges of Education is highly theoretical and does not have pragmatic exposure through internships, incubation training, and project-based learning [9]. Insufficient proper instructional resources, properly trained entrepreneurship teachers further exacerbate these limitations and also challenges the value and appropriateness of entrepreneurship education [10].

The way in which students perceive education in entrepreneurship is important a great extent since perception drives the intention to work with the content,

inspires motivation towards learning entrepreneurial skills, and eventually determines entrepreneurial intention [11]. Students perceiving that entrepreneurship education has applicability in real life and is relevant are bound to have good attitudes towards self-employment and innovative entrepreneurship [1]. On the other hand, negative attitudes can restrict learning participation to result in poor entrepreneurial performance in spite of curriculum reforms. However, there is no research specifically designed for Colleges of Education a very important part of Nigeria's teacher education system. Nowadays, most research concentrates mainly on university students or narrowly technical areas such as engineering or vocational training [12], [9]. This ignorance is a cause for concern since teacher-trainees are in a unique place to shape entrepreneurial culture within primary and secondary schools. Should these students themselves bear lukewarm or negative attitudes toward entrepreneurship education, then policy implications of cultivating large-scale entrepreneurial mindset may be lessened.

The current study thus bridges an essential knowledge gap by investigating how entrepreneurial intentions of students in Colleges of Education are influenced by entrepreneurship education and their view of entrepreneurship education. Through its concentration on students' attitudes towards the applicability of entrepreneurship courses, competence of trainers, and sufficiency of course material, the current study offers empirical support required to advance entrepreneurship education in teacher training institutions and maximize its transformative capability for Nigeria's economic development.

A. Objectives

- Ascertain male and female students' perception of entrepreneurship education in Colleges of Education in Nigeria.
- Examine how federal and state colleges of education students perceive the competence and effectiveness of entrepreneurship trainers
- Evaluate students' views on entrepreneurship curriculum and course content.

B. Research Questions

- What is the perception of male and female students about entrepreneurship education in Colleges of Education in Nigeria?
- How federal and state colleges of education students perceive the competence and effectiveness of entrepreneurship trainers?
- What are students' views regarding entrepreneurship curriculum and course content?

C. Hypotheses

H_{01}: There is no significant difference between male and female students' perceptions of entrepreneurship education.

H_{02}: There is no significant difference between male and female students' perceptions of entrepreneurship trainers' competence and effectives.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Entrepreneurship education is the systematic process of teaching and learning aimed at equipping individuals with the desired knowledge, skills, and competences to identify opportunities, mobilize resources, and set up or manage business ventures effectively [7], [2]. As opposed to regular business studies that mainly concentrate on managing established businesses, entrepreneurship education centers on finding opportunities, innovation, risk-taking, and value creation [1]. Such education is not just to transfer theoretical know-how but also to promote experiential learning through business simulations, internships, and start-ups that test problem-solving and creativity. In developing economies like Nigeria, training for entrepreneurship is likely to fight structural employment and underemployment, activate industrialization, and cut over-reliance on civil service employment [5]. Attitude of students towards entrepreneurship education is the final determinant in whether or not it accomplishes its missions.

Perception, or the ability to structure and interpret sensory input, affects students' intentions, degree of engagement, and motivation towards entrepreneurial engagement in the future [11]. Students, when they find that entrepreneurship education is empowering, meaningful, and captivating, are most likely to develop positive entrepreneurial career and self-employment dispositions. On the other hand, negative attitudes perhaps due to poor quality of teaching, lack of sufficient practical exposure, or perceived uselessness of resources may decrease students' intention to employ entrepreneurship skills upon graduation [8]. Entrepreneurial intention is, in itself, a psychological state reflecting an individual's readiness to commence a venture in the future [13]. It has been considered to be a good entrepreneurial activity predictor because entrepreneurial work is inclined to require planning and preparation before actual application. Empirical evidence shows that entrepreneurial education can significantly influence entrepreneurial intention as it changes the attitudes of students, improves their perceived behavior control, and acquaints them with entrepreneurial models and entrepreneurial opportunities [3], [1].

D. Theoretical framework

This study is informed by [13]. Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), which describes how attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control determine a person's intention to engage in a particular behavior. In the case of education in entrepreneurship, students' attitudes to entrepreneurship courses, peer and family (subjective norms) influence, and belief in having the capability to become an entrepreneur (perceived behavioral control) collectively determine their entrepreneurial intention. For example, a student who thinks that entrepreneurship studies equip them with real, relevant skills (positive attitude), has friends and role models who appreciate entrepreneurial activities (favorable subjective norms), and perceives they can set up a business (high perceived behavioral control) will have a higher intention to start a business after graduation.

TPB is especially useful in the context of entrepreneurship education as it emphasizes that entrepreneurial intention does not emerge in a vacuum but is filtered through

perceptions and external factors. Perceptions of curriculum relevance, instruction, and practical relevance directly affect attitudes and perceived behavioral control. If entrepreneurship education is seen as unrelated or theoretical, then attitudes will decline, lowering intention irrespective of course completion. On the other hand, practical entrepreneurship learning that links hands-on exposure and mentorship can enhance perceived behavioral control, and hence entrepreneurial intention. Other researchers supplement TPB by incorporating constructs like entrepreneurial self-efficacy [14] and opportunity recognition [15], and indicate that entrepreneurship learning is likely to enhance the psychological preparedness and actual ability for business start-up. In this regard, the TPB offers a sound theoretical framework for examining how students' attitudes toward entrepreneurship education are converted into entrepreneurial intention, and therefore it is fitting for this study.

E. Empirical Review

Empirical research on entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurial intention has mostly yielded convergent results: students that are positively disposed toward entrepreneurship education also have more powerful entrepreneurial intentions and startup behavior. For example, [16] targeted engineering students in Modibo Adama University of Technology in Nigeria and discovered that the students perceived entrepreneurship education as relevant and useful, where they highly commended the competency of the trainers. Moreover, [12] established that North-East Nigerian students believed that they gained improved entrepreneurial skills and knowledge following the entrepreneurial courses, even though they blamed inadequate exposure to real-world business environments.[10] noted a double perception among university students of entrepreneurial education: positive attitudes to the idea but fear in application and teaching process. [8] underscored that entrepreneurial must be practical in nature in order to affect student attitudes; theoretical information has minimal impact on entrepreneurial intention. Outside Nigeria, [1] demonstrated in the European context that entrepreneurial education has a positive influence on entrepreneurial attitude and intentions, with the effects still being evident even years post-graduation.

Later research emphasized the need to place more emphasis on experiential learning and mentoring. [11] identified that students who received entrepreneur education with live projects, internships, and exposure to successful entrepreneurs had a high probability of becoming entrepreneurs. In their study, [6] identified that incorporating modules of entrepreneurship into teacher training programs enhanced entrepreneurial orientation among teacher-trainees, which they later passed on to their students. Yet [5] supplemented that most Nigerian colleges remain without proper infrastructure and personnel to provide entrepreneurship courses efficiently, shortchanging their potential. In spite of these results, the majority of existing research concentrates on technical or universities, leaving a knowledge gap when it comes to Colleges of Education, where prospective educators being crucial multiplier agents of entrepreneurial attitudes are prepared. Bridging the gap is crucial since teachers are strong influencers in imbuing young learners with career orientations and entrepreneurial skills. How trainee teachers view entrepreneurship education and how that influences their startup intentions will guide the teacher education, curriculum design, and policy development that will lead to an entrepreneurial society.

III. METHODOLOGY

This study employed a descriptive survey design, which was appropriate for quantifying opinions, perceptions, and attitudes of a given population [16]. This design allowed the researchers to observe and note students' perceptions of entrepreneurship education and how these perceptions influence entrepreneurial intention without manipulating any variables. The study was conducted in four Colleges of Education in the North-Central geo-political zone of Nigeria, which were chosen to represent both federal and state ownership structures. The population of the study comprised all the students in the colleges, and the sample consisted of 239 students who were chosen using a multi-stage sampling technique. In the first stage, colleges were stratified in terms of ownership (federal and state), from which two colleges were randomly selected from each stratum. In the second stage, proportionate sampling was used in the selection of the students from respective departments offering entrepreneurship courses.

Data were collected using a researcher-designed questionnaire modeled on a five-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Agree [5] to Strongly Disagree [1]. For content validity, the questionnaire was reviewed by two measurement and evaluation experts and one entrepreneurship education expert, then revised for clarity and relevance. Pilot testing was done on 30 students from a non-participating college, with a Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient of 0.84, showing high internal consistency. The data were gathered through personal administration by the researchers and trained research assistants, giving a high rate of return. Analysis involved the use of descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) in addressing research questions, where independent t-tests were employed in null hypotheses testing at 0.05 level of significance. A decision mean of 2.50 was employed as the criterion in determining students' positive or negative perceptions.

IV. RESULT

Table 1 indicates that students have a positive attitude towards entrepreneurship education, with a range of mean scores from 3.12 to 3.45, all above the decision mean value of 2.50. The highest rated statement indicates that students consider entrepreneurship education as something that can be applied to their future career (Mean = 3.45, SD = 0.98), while the lowest rated one is entrepreneurship education's impact on business start-up intentions (Mean = 3.12, SD = 1.07). This implies that students appreciate the worth and significance of entrepreneurship education but feel a sense of requirement for greater stress on translation into entrepreneurial activity.

Table 1: Students' Perception of Entrepreneurship Education

Item	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	SD
Entrepreneurship education prepares students with self-employment skills.	120	80	25	14	3.21	1.02
Entrepreneurship education is relevant to future careers.	150	60	20	9	3.45	0.98
Entrepreneurship education influences my intention to start a business.	110	85	30	14	3.12	1.07

(Source: SPPS Version 25)

Table 2: Students' Perception of Entrepreneurship Trainers

Item	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	SD
Trainers demonstrate entrepreneurial competence.	130	70	25	14	3.20	1.01
Trainers use interactive and practical teaching methods.	140	65	20	14	3.25	1.00
Trainers inspire entrepreneurial interest in students.	135	70	25	9	3.29	0.97

(Source: SPPS Version 25)

Table 2, the students find their trainers to be effective and competent, with mean ratings ranging from 3.20 to 3.29. The highest rated perception is that trainers develop entrepreneurial interest in students (Mean = 3.29, SD = 0.97), and the lowest rated is on trainers exhibiting entrepreneurial competence (Mean = 3.20, SD = 1.01). This indicates that students are satisfied with the teaching style of the trainers and motivational intervention, but there is room for improvement in exhibiting actual entrepreneurial proficiency.

Table 3: Perception of Curriculum Content

Item	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	SD
Curriculum content is adequate for entrepreneurship.	100	90	35	14	3.05	1.06
Curriculum offers practical entrepreneurial exposure.	95	90	40	14	2.96	1.12
Course contents motivate creative business ideas.	110	80	35	14	3.12	1.04

(Source: SPPS Version 25)

Table 3 illustrates divergent views regarding curriculum and course content with mean ratings between 2.96 and 3.12. The highest rated item is course contents stimulate innovative business ideas (Mean = 3.12, SD = 1.04), while the lowest rating is practical entrepreneurial exposure facilitated by the curriculum (Mean = 2.96, SD = 1.12). This implies that while students appreciate the curriculum insofar as ideas are concerned, they do not find practical, experiential entrepreneurial training to be sufficient.

Hypotheses

H_{01}: There is no significant difference between male and female students' perceptions of entrepreneurship education.

Table 4: Male and female students' attitudes towards entrepreneurship education

Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
Male	120	3.24	0.62	0.06	-1.12	237	.263	-0.07	0.06
Female	119	3.31	0.58	0.05					

(Source: SPPS Version 25)

The results presented in Table 4 reflect male and female students' attitudes towards entrepreneurship education. Male students (N = 120) gave a mean score of 3.24 (SD = 0.62), while female students (N = 119) gave a mean score of 3.31 (SD = 0.58). Independent samples t-test provided a value of -1.12 with degrees of freedom equal to 237 and two-tailed significance of 0.263. Because the p-value of 0.263 is greater than the 0.05 alpha level, we have no reason to reject the null hypothesis (H_{01}). This indicates that there is no statistically significant difference in male and female students' attitudes towards entrepreneurship education. In substantive terms, male and female students have a similar view about entrepreneurship education, suggesting that gender does not influence the manner in which students view the value and effectiveness of entrepreneurship education in Colleges of Education.

H_{02}: There is no significant difference between students of federal and state colleges in their perception of entrepreneurship education.

Table 5: Difference in perception between federal and state Colleges of Education

Ownership	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
Federal	121	3.30	0.60	0.05	1.45	237	.149	0.09	0.06
State	118	3.21	0.64	0.06					

(Source: SPPS Version 25)

Table 5 provides the difference in perception between federal and state Colleges of Education students. The mean was 3.30 (SD = 0.60) for the federal college students (N = 121), compared to 3.21 (SD = 0.64) for their state college equivalents. Conducting an independent samples t-test, the t-statistic was 1.45 with 237 degrees of freedom and two-tailed p = 0.149. As the p-value (0.149) is greater than the 0.05 alpha level, we reject not the null hypothesis (H_{02}). In other words, there is no statistically significant difference between the perception of state and federal students regarding entrepreneurship education. The findings further suggest that institutional ownership has no significant impact on students' perception of entrepreneurship education, suggesting homogeneity of perception among different Colleges of Education.

V. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Findings indicate students generally hold positive perceptions of entrepreneurship education, which are consistent with [9] whose findings also revealed similar trends among engineering students. Students view entrepreneurship education as significant and effective in the development of entrepreneurial intentions [12]. However, concerns of an inadequate number of practical experiences and low-quality curriculum content repeat earlier findings by [10]. Students viewed trainers as good and inspiring, with positive dispositions towards teachers' instruction styles, consistent with [1] argument that instructor effectiveness determines entrepreneurship learning performance. No contrast existed between gender and institutional type, indicating a consistent pattern of perception across groups. This is supported by evidence of [8] that perceptions regarding entrepreneurship education are influenced more by instructional design than by personal characteristics.

VI. CONCLUSION

Students of Colleges of Education perceive entrepreneurship education in a positive light, and they see its relevance in career development and intention building. Trainers are considered qualified, yet content for the curriculum and exposure to actual entrepreneurial enterprises need to be enhanced.

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the following are recommended:

- Curriculum planners should revamp entrepreneurship education to integrate experiential training (e.g., internships and start-up simulations).
- Trainers should utilize interactive pedagogies and introduce local entrepreneurial case studies.
- Industry partnerships should be created by colleges to provide students with practical business exposure.
- The government should increase financing for entrepreneurship labs and innovation centers in Colleges of Education.

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