



A THEMATIC ANALYSIS ON THE EFFECT OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP PEDAGOGY ON IDENTIFICATION OF BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES BY ENGINEERING STUDENTS: A CASE OF COVENANT UNIVERSITY

OlokundunMaxwell

Covenant University Ota Ogun State Nigeria

Ibidunni, Ayodotun Stephen

Covenant University Ota Ogun State Nigeria

Mercy Ogbari

Covenant University Ota Ogun State Nigeria

Fred Peter

Covenant University Ota Ogun State Nigeria

ABSTRACT

The role of entrepreneurship pedagogy in spurring opportunity identification by entrepreneurship students can't be over accentuated. This owes to the fact that the pedagogical methodologies embraced in an entrepreneurship program have consequences on the ability of students to can conceptualise entrepreneurship in actuality. Customarily, entrepreneurship education is domiciled in the field of business however, researchers in fields such as engineering have also perceived the benefit of advancing entrepreneurial abilities among their students. Therefore, the objective of this research was to explore the viability of the entrepreneurship pedagogy embraced in a selected Nigerian university setting and its adequacy in rousing engineering students to distinguish business opportunities. To this end semi structured interviews were utilized to gather information from entrepreneurship instructors training engineering students in Covenant University and thematic analysis was utilised to analyse the information gathered. Results demonstrated that a good number of the enterprise teachers see the practical sessions as important to students' identification of business opportunities. The instructors were likewise of the opinion that the class sessions are dull and may hinder students' interest and attention

on identifying market gaps. The study recommended that there is a requirement for a change in perspective in the academic methodologies engaged in Covenant university from hypothetical to experiential methodologies for both class and practical sessions.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship pedagogy; Identification of Business Opportunities, Engineering students.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The viability of an entrepreneurship pedagogy relies on the appropriation of a methodology that mirrors a profoundly unique mix of theoretical understanding and engagement of salient practical skills and aptitude (Krueger Reilly and Carsrud 2000). This is based on the fact that the methodology embraced affects the development of entrepreneurial skills by students. Recognizing business opportunities is a basic and matchless component of entrepreneurship (Ardichvili, Cardozo, and Ray, 2003; Eckhardt and Shane, 2003; Man, Lau and Chan, 2002; McMullen, Plummer, and Acs, 2007; Shane and Venkataraman, 2000), and is thought to be the underlying phase of the entrepreneurial process (Christensen, Madsen, and Peterson, 1994). Basically, without the recognition of business opportunities, entrepreneurship cannot be accomplished, this elucidates why opportunity identification or recognition has become a noteworthy focal point in entrepreneurship research (Olokundun et al. 2017). Consequently, the role of pedagogical methodologies adopted in spurring identification of business opportunities by entrepreneurship students particularly in the university context cannot be over stressed. This is consequential on the fact that pedagogical methodologies embraced in an entrepreneurship program affects the way undergraduates conceptualise entrepreneurship in real life situations (Akinbola, Ogunnaike&Amaihian 2013; Ogbari, et al. 2016).With particular emphasison the university setting, the investigation of Saks and Gaglio (2002) demonstrated that little is thought about whether and how identification of business opportunities is taught in the classroom in universities. Notwithstanding, Detienne and Chandler (2004) contended that undergraduates are able to learn the process of opportunity identification in entrepreneurial classes. To this end, Munoz, Mosey, and Binks (2011) inferred that entrepreneurship courses in universities need to propel a change in the impression of undergraduates about entrepreneurship with respect to the real world and empower them to adequately and proficiently distinguish new business opportunities. This proposes a need to draw in pragmatic pedagogical methodologies to inspire university students to identify business opportunities. This is on account of the fact that understanding the process of entrepreneurship in an experiential setting may propel opportunity identification by entrepreneurship students.

Generally, entrepreneurship education is domiciled in the field of business however, researchers in other fields particularly engineering have embraced the benefits of developing entrepreneurial abilities among engineering students (Defillippi& Arthur, 1994; Gou, 2009; Gurãu, 2006). It implies that more university students with various backgrounds and motivations must be tutored in entrepreneurship (Taatala, 2010), and subsequently there is a need to analyse the development of entrepreneurial capacities among engineering students. Most investigations on entrepreneurship pedagogical methods and identification of business

opportunities by university students have been done outside the Nigerian setting. Therefore, there is a need to research the viability of the pedagogical approach engaged in the Nigerian university setting and its adequacy in propelling undergraduates to identify business opportunities. To this end, an assessment of the viability of the pedagogical method engaged in Covenant university was carried out to determine the adequacy of the method in propelling engineering undergraduates of the institution to identify relevant business opportunities.

2. CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

Entrepreneurship Pedagogy

Pedagogy is the scholastic discipline that is associated with the theory of teaching and learning and the impact on students. To this end, an entrepreneurship pedagogy guides an entrepreneurship educator's activity, judgments, and techniques by paying cognisance to models of learning, understanding of students and their needs, and the prior experience and interests of individual students with regards to entrepreneurial development. Entrepreneurship Pedagogy incorporates how the enterprise teacher communicates with students and the social and scholarly environment the instructor tries to create while teaching entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship pedagogy emphasizes the development of entrepreneurial potentials and abilities of students as well as the impartation of entrepreneurial aptitudes and capacities. Mostly, entrepreneurship pedagogy is portrayed by techniques considered as best suited considering student's experience, circumstance, and condition, as well as the entrepreneurial learning objectives set by both the students and the teacher.

Opportunity Identification

Dragan (2012) delineated opportunity identification as the foundation of an enterprise. Krueger, Reilly, and Carsrud (2000) argued that every business idea requires an incubation period where the innovation matches with the opportunity, in light of the fact that innovation isn't an opportunity in itself. In the context of entrepreneurship education, Wouter (2010) described business opportunity identification as an entrepreneurial activity that can happen while students are still in school. This opinion was maintained by Klein (2008) whose survey suggests that students at all levels ought to have the capacity to identify business opportunities. Subsequently, it is notable that opportunity identification is a desirable entrepreneurial behavior in the university setting since it emanates from a nexus of goals and intention of students and the successful creation of value by them.

Entrepreneurship Pedagogy and Opportunity Identification

Entrepreneurship pedagogy in universities should motivate students to engage in practical activities that motivate business opportunity the identification. This resonates the work of Saks and Gaglio (2002) which focused on the development of business opportunity identification capabilities by undergraduates. The work of Detienne and Chandler (2004) demonstrated that opportunity identification is a capacity that can be learnt in the classroom with the appropriate methodologies. In another examination by Nab, Bulte, and Pilot (2013) on enhancing the capability of science undergraduates in recognizing business opportunities, using 23 graduate students of Utrecht University as respondents. The results demonstrated that students could recognize business opportunities in quest for entrepreneurial aspirations and desires. Despite what might be expected, Nkala and Wanjau (2013) in a research which laid emphasis on entrepreneurship programs in institutions of higher learning in Nairobi Kenya, affirmed that entrepreneurship educators utilize conventional academic methodologies that are not practically situated. As indicated by the authors, this negatively affects entrepreneurial learning and the propensity for business opportunity identification by

students. The discoveries of these observational examinations suggest that there is a connection between entrepreneurship pedagogy and the penchant of university students to identify business opportunities. What is also deserving of note is that the vast majority of these researches were carried out outside the Nigerian university setting. Along these lines, an examination on the impacts of the entrepreneurship pedagogy embraced in Nigerian colleges and the suggestions for identification of business openings by students is viewed as a noteworthy issue in entrepreneurship education research in the Nigerian setting. This study, however, is delimiting its investigation on the effect of entrepreneurship pedagogical methods on business opportunity identification by engineering students in Covenant University.

3. METHODOLOGY

Research Instruments

Semi-structured interviews were framed around pre-decided open-ended questions that enhanced free-streaming discussions which invigorated dynamic participation. The interview included three sorts of questions: engagement questions to acquaint participants with the theme; exploration questions to get to the hull of the dialog; and exit questions to guarantee that nothing was absent in the discussions. To guarantee that participants responded to the questions posed, the questions were short and straight to the point, concentrated on each dimension of the research, unambiguously worded, and open ended.

4. DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURE

The choice of Covenant University was considered appropriate because of the institution's emphasis on raising student entrepreneurs. Therefore, using Covenant University as a case study is considered appropriate in this regard. Data was collected from assessments of final year engineering students of the College of Engineering in 2017. These data were records of entrepreneurship educators based on a required business plan assignment. Morse (2000) suggested a range of eight to twelve participants as adequate sample size, to enhance a comprehensive description and establish implications for repeated patterns and trends of responses. Therefore, ten (10) entrepreneurship educators participated in the research and semi structured interviews were used to collect information from the participants.

5. METHOD OF DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

The interview recordings were translated and broken down through thematic analysis to distinguish and report patterns in the data (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis was utilised in distinguishing and depicting both obvious and unequivocal thoughts in the data which are alluded to the participants. Reiteration of terms and repetition of ideas were utilised to create themes. The Thematic analysis concentrated on entrepreneurship instructors' view of entrepreneurship pedagogy and engineering students' propensity to recognise business opportunities. Open coding was utilised to create applicable categories. The developed codes were utilised to identify distinguished themes and the reports were structured based on the main themes emerging from the semi-structured interviews.

6. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Arbnor and Bjerke (1997) contend that each employee in an organisation or a general public have a privilege to be shielded from open investigation of their private life. To this end, the authors ensured that the participants were well educated about the basis for this research and they were kept up to date with the participation procedure and administration. Each participant was offered the chance to remain unknown and their responses were dealt with

privately. Consent was gotten from the relevant authorities in the schools where interviews were conducted.

7. RESULTS

Theme One: Practical Activities and Students identification of business opportunities/Entrepreneurial abilities

Most of the entrepreneurship educators perceive the practical activities engaged in teaching entrepreneurship as largely relevant to opportunity identification. The responses also suggest that the practical activities enhance students to discover gaps in the business world, identify business opportunities, develop entrepreneurial abilities as well as consider entrepreneurship as a viable career option.

“There are sessions that are practical orientated and able to show students’ how to discover gaps in the business world” [ED1]

“There are practical activities that make students to discover entrepreneurial opportunities” [ED2]

“There are evidences that the practical approaches adopted make students see problems that exist in the society that can be exploited as entrepreneurial opportunities” [ED3]

“The program involves practical class activities that motivate students to discover viable opportunities” [ED4]

Theme Two: Class Sessions and Business Opportunity Identification

The educators were of the opinion that the class sessions were monotonous and may impede students’ interest and focus as it relates to discovering market gaps or opportunities. This implies that a linkage was established between the design of the theoretical sessions/ classroom sessions and students’ focus in class as well as their interest in vital information related to opportunity identification disseminated in these sessions. Extracts from the statements of the educators are quoted in the following paragraphs.

“The teaching environment for the theoretical sessions do not effectively encourage brainstorming this could be averse to students’ interest and disposition towards identification of viable business opportunities” [ED5].

The teaching sessions should be less theoretical if it must stimulate business opportunity identification by students so that they do not see teaching sessions as a waste of time [ED6]”

Efforts must be made to really improve on engaging practical activities in class sessions; at present it is largely the conventional method of teaching”. Hence students are usually distracted and they hardly listen in class talk more of trying to discover entrepreneurial opportunities at their disposal” [ED7].

“The class sessions are usually ineffective because of the large student population per class [ED8]”.

There is hardly any likelihood that students can discover business opportunities in these sessions” [ED9].

Theme Three: Talent Development Counseling and Opportunity Identification

Two educators also opined that even though the practical approaches are able to motivate opportunity identification, there should be talent development counseling sessions in order to motivate the discovery of relevant business opportunities by students’ as it relates to their’ talent or innate abilities.

“Academic excellence is emphasized at the deterrent of talent [ED6]”

“I expect that the hands on exercises in the institution ought to be custom fitted towards the business potentials of undergraduates”[10].

8. DISCUSSION

The Thematic investigation concentrated on entrepreneurship pedagogy and student's attitude towards entrepreneurial related learning. Results demonstrated that entrepreneurship pedagogy embraced in Covenant university lay accentuation on opportunity identification as a noteworthy outcome of the course. This is in accordance with the work of Olokundun et al (2017) which demonstrated that the pedagogical methodologies can inspire students' shared vision and propensity for opportunity identification. Furthermore, the study also revealed that class sessions are boring and monotonous. This aligns with the study of Keat, Selvarajah, and Meyer (2011) who found that theoretical sessions where students are spoon-fed encourages learners to become passive hence, losing focus and interest in the sessions. This is also endorsing the work of Agbonlahor (2016) who found that universities in Nigeria do not offer a right blend of theoretical and practical approaches which does not give students real world experience, hence negating focus and interests of students in the class sessions. Two of the participants (entrepreneurship educators) interviewed also affirmed that learning activities should be student oriented and carefully packaged to motivate students to discover their talents and innate abilities. This statement brings to fore a possible linkage between entrepreneurship education and students' innate talents and potentials. This confirms the study of Ifeluni (2003) and Onyilofor (2010) who asserted that students require counseling regarding placement in right courses and proper assessment, in order to identify individual dexterity, interest, abilities, potentialities, towards provoking their entrepreneurial aspirations.

9. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Grounded on the outcomes of this study carried out in Covenant university, there is a requirement for a change in the pedagogical methodologies embraced in Nigerian universities from academic or theoretical to more practical or experiential methodologies. Problem Based Learning (PBL), Learning by Doing (LBD), or Do it Yourself (DIY) approaches are very suited for both class and hands-on activities engaged in the course of an entrepreneurship program. These methodologies can impact students' comprehension of the process of entrepreneurship and furthermore spur recognition of business opportunities on the grounds that experiential learning models motivate the engagement of real-life scenarios, this is vital in light of the fact that a business idea can translate into a business enterprise, only if a target market is identified and exploited. There may also be a need to introduce sessions and activities that enhance students' discovery of talents and innate abilities in order to identify individual dexterity, interest, abilities, and potentialities, towards provoking entrepreneurial aspirations and development of relevant entrepreneurial competencies.

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