

Entrepreneurship Education and Self Employment in Uganda. An Empirical Study of Youths Graduates from selected Universities in Mbarara District, Western Uganda.

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ABSTRACT:- Entrepreneurship education remains crucial in changing graduates' attitudes and mind set from training to search for jobs to training to start and run business ventures and be self-employed. The purpose of this study was to ascertain whether entrepreneurship training in Institutions of higher learning motivates graduates to be self-employed as a way of reducing youths unemployment in Uganda. The study findings seem to suggest that institutions of higher learning teach entrepreneurship with the intention of making graduates be self-employed through knowledge and skills development. However, the study findings revealed that the teaching of entrepreneurship has remained theoretical and as such students still lack the required skills and competencies to practically take risks of starting up and running their own business ventures. The study recommends that Institutions of higher learning should equip the teaching of entrepreneurship with the required facilities like putting in place business incubators to teach practical entrepreneurship as well as using skilled and competent lecturers as facilitators for entrepreneurship courses. This will enable most students of entrepreneurship start business ventures as a project that should be developed as the course is still going on and by the time a student graduates, he/she should be having a well-developed business venture that can be implemented after graduation. This will act as a motivation that will change the mindset of searching for jobs on completion to job creation on completion. The study further recommends that Institutions should involve government as development partner in training entrepreneurship by offering enough training facilities for entrepreneurship as well as putting in place funds that can be accessed by graduates that come up with good business innovations and inventions. This will act as a motivator for entrepreneurship graduates to be critical business innovators and inventors that will make them practical entrepreneurs who will start and run business ventures that will make them self-employed.

Key words: Entrepreneurship, Education, Youths, Graduates, Self-employment, Institutions, Higher learning

I. INTRODUCTION

Education is among the key driving factors in the national development plans of both developed and developing countries as it lays the firm foundation for the required knowledge and skills for the job market (Webster, 2000). Education is also regarded a key component of human capital quality that is essential for employability for higher incomes and sustainable economic growth and development of any country (Ministry of Gender, Labour & Social Development, 2014). Education is further recognized as an essential ingredient in poverty eradication. Much as countries have put in place policies aiming at equipping the human resource with knowledge and skills to make them competitive in the job market, currently the rate of unemployment in developing countries is extremely high among the high schools and Institutions graduates who are trained and prepared for white collar jobs that are insufficient to absorb a substantial big number of them. In an effort of reversing the trend of escalating unemployment and underemployment of graduates, entrepreneurship education has been taken to be significant in preparing graduates to be self-employed (Nishantha, 2008). This is because graduate entrepreneurship is a process taken by a graduate to start businesses in terms of an individual career orientation (Olufunso, 2010). The world needs graduates who are innovative, dynamic, smart, daring, efficient, determined, risk taker, modern, and employable. This is seen as one of the major interventions in reducing the youths unemployment and underemployment that are becoming a challenge for many developing countries including Uganda. Kirzner (1973) identified the function of entrepreneurship as a market discovery process, which

highlights the processes of recognition and discovery of under explored opportunities, the ability to take risk and launch a new business, and the capacity entrepreneurs have to move from discovery to real entrepreneurial action. Therefore, one could define an entrepreneur as someone who sees an opportunity and has the ability to act on that perception (Miller, 1983; Shane, 2010). Entrepreneurship that stimulates the formation of new and innovative business startups world over is vital in stimulating economic growth and development in all economies of the world ((Mesfin & Shumet, 2018). However, Entrepreneurship does not follow straight-line as it involves a lot of processes that are quite difficult (Neck & Greene 2011). Institutions and organizations that teach entrepreneurship therefore have to understand the changing environment while taking the task of educating students to have knowledge, skills and attitude to enable them not only to compete and survive as individuals but also contribute to economic growth through exploitation of country's resources. It is important to note however, that the focus of teaching entrepreneurship courses have been based on the outdated approach that have focused on theoretical business plans development as opposed to real business practice (Honig 2004; Solomon 2007), as many courses are still built on theory other than practical (Pittaway & Edwards 2012). This is also emphasized by (Daniel 2016) who observed that the teaching of entrepreneurship is anchored on business planning and forecast, which according to (Carrier 2005; von Graevenitz et al. 2010), have a negative impact on graduates 'intention to start their businesses and become self-employed. According to Liñán&Fayolle (2015), the intention of teaching entrepreneurship courses to students is to create the positive impact through cultivating the culture of intention to start business ventures. This is because courses that focus on developing skills and competences show that students are more likely to start business ventures on completion (Nabi et al. 2017). As a response to the traditional entrepreneurship courses, Neck and Greene (2011) stress that entrepreneurship education should focus on how to act, anticipate, and generate in an unknown future. A possible way to do this is to take a design thinking approach of entrepreneurship education (Stovang and Nielsen 2015).

Much as the economy of Uganda has been growing at a rate of 6.5% per year on average for the last two decades, the capacity of the economy to generate sufficient employment for the labour force has been constrained by among others, the high population growth rate of 3.2% per annum and inadequate level of investment in the country (Ministry of Gender, Labour & Social Development, 2014). It is important to note that over, 70% of the country's population of over 40 million people is below 30 years of age and as a result, youths unemployment stands at about 70% and over, 400,000 youths are released from tertiary Institutions in Uganda annually into the job market to compete for approximately 10,000 available jobs (UBOS, 2019). Much as Uganda is ranked as second most entrepreneurial economy in the world after Cameroon, most of these youths are necessity entrepreneurs (those that engage in entrepreneurship due to a lack of jobs) as opposed to being opportunity entrepreneurs (motivated by desire for and pursuit of business). And as such a big number abandon their businesses when they secure formal employment and those that persist in their businesses, a big number of them collapse due to lack of concentration caused by low attitude and perception towards businesses (Byamugisha et al., 2014). However, research shows that graduates with positive attitude towards self-employment, entrepreneurship training motivates and encourages them to startup businesses of their own and those with the mind set of working in well-established organizations and institutions with negative attitude towards self-employment, cannot startup their businesses even when they are equipped with the knowledge and skills through entrepreneurship training (Fitzsimmons & Douglass, 2005). Likewise, an individual with higher tolerance for risk and less aversion to work effort should be expected to be more likely to engage in entrepreneurial behavior (Douglas & Shepherd, 2002). This study therefore intended to find out the effect of entrepreneurship education on graduate youthson self-employment in the context of Uganda.

Problem statement

Institutions of higher learning in Uganda are teaching entrepreneurship in most of their programmes focusing on changing the attitude of graduates from training to looking for jobs to training to getting knowledge, skills and attitude that enable them start their own businesses and become self-employed, as a way of reducing the unemployment among the youths in the country. This initiative has been emphasized by the government policy where entrepreneurship has been emphasized at lower levels of education and in institutions of higher learning. Despite these initiatives, statistics show that in 2014, the unemployment in Uganda stood at 58% (national Census, 2014) and African Development bank puts Uganda's unemployment rate at 83% (African Development bank, 2014) and in 2016 it stood at 80% (SNV, 2016). This situation is worsening amidst various Institutions teaching entrepreneurship that is supposed to reverse the increasing unemployment trend in the country. Therefore this study tried to find out whether entrepreneurship education motivates graduates to take on business ventures and become self-employed in Ugandan context.

The purpose and objectives of the study

The purpose of this study is to assess the influence of entrepreneurship training in Institutions of higher learning on graduates' self-employment.

Objective of the study

The objective of the study was to find out whether entrepreneurship training in institutions of higher learning motivates graduates to start up their businesses and be self-employed.

Importance and Justification of the Study

The outcome of this study is of significant value to policy makers and administrators at government level. It may enable them revisit and revise the policies on how entrepreneurship syllabus can be reviewed by national curriculum development center in line with the Ministry of Education and Sports. The reviewed curriculum will equip graduates with knowledge, skills with the change of attitude towards self-employment aiming at reducing youths unemployment in Uganda. Effective strategies used by the government in enforcing entrepreneurship training may be identified and recommendations made to government on how to improve practice. Although a lot of studies have been done on entrepreneurship education in many countries, there is scarce literature on how entrepreneurship taught in institutions of higher learning shapes a graduate to be self-employed through innovations and inventions in Ugandan context which motivated the researcher to undertake this study.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical literature

Ensuring the sustainability of employment to graduates is becoming a worldwide challenge, although institutions of higher learning of various countries have inspired students to start and operate their own enterprises that make them self-employed (Moreno, Castillo & Triguero, 2012). Self-employment goal has been explained as: the intention to start a new venture (Zhao, Hills, & Seibert, 2005), the intention to own a venture (Crant, 1996), or the intention to be self-employed (Douglas & Shepherd, 2002). Entrepreneurship education has been taken as a good motivator by inspiring students to have personal initiatives that can bring about mindset change towards self-employment by starting and running their own businesses (Dugassa, 2012). However, Ayalew & Zeleke, (2018) found out that personal decision is key in making someone to be self-employed or to decide to be an employee of an already established enterprise. For instance opportunities for making one to be a manager of one's business that makes profits may attract graduates to start-up business ventures. Similarly unhealthy conditions of work accompanied by lower pay than anticipated, makes paid employment unattractive. It is therefore important to note that becoming self-employed or taking a decision to be employed have been discussed in entrepreneurship literature, where self-employment is taken to be identical with entrepreneurship since a number of studies have taken self-employment as indirect measure of entrepreneurship (Bjuggren, Johansson, & Stenkula, 2012; Rietveld, Hessels, & Zwan, 2014). In the entrepreneurial growth procedure, students who learn, develop their innovative skills and self-management skills tend to exploit more opportunities that enhance their entrepreneurial knowledge and experiences which are vital for business start-ups and development (Tseng, 2013). It is also noted that students with inventive outlook tend to be more likely to generate good ideas that result into new business ventures that can start and grow steadily (Okpara, 2007). On the other hand, high successes on innovations based on previous entrepreneurial experiences have a direct association with entrepreneurial inclinations, whereas the feel of failure has an indirect influence with entrepreneurial preferences (Hamidi, Wennberg, & Berglund, 2008). However, differences in education background based on different faculties and departments within the same training institution may create different perceptions on the students' perceptions to start business ventures (Wu & Wu, 2008). Students are more likely to take the choice of starting their own businesses, when they compare theirs with others and have a feel that theirs are more successful (Zampetakis, Kafetsios, Bouranta, Dewett, & Moustakis, 2009). Researchers have also found out that social factors like family background, previous business experiences, risk attitude, the desire to be independent, the culture and values of society as well as individual life career play vital role in motivating an individual to have an intention to start and manage the business ventures (Sanditov & Verspagen, 2011). This study intends to find out how entrepreneurship education influences graduates to have intentions to start business ventures and become self-employed in Ugandan context.

III. RESEARCH DESIGN

In order to explore and have a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of the entrepreneurship education role on graduates self-employment and reduction of youths unemployment in Uganda, a case study design was used in this research. A case study involves rigorous and comprehensive qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis about the case under study (Luck, Jackson, & Usher 2006). In this study, both

quantitative and qualitative data were collected and analyzed to enhance the understanding of the problem under investigation. Conceptually, this study used explanatory sequential mixed-methods design, one of the commonly used mixed methods designs in educational research that contains two distinct phases (Creswell, 2003). In this study, data collection was done in two phases. In the first phase, numeric data was collected and analyzed using descriptive statistics. Emerging issues from quantitative analysis were studied further qualitatively under phase two and there after integration of both quantitative and qualitative analyses were done and interpreted in line with research problem.

Target Population

The target population for this study were graduates that completed their university education from 2010 to 2018 from the two universities, one public and the other private in Mbarara district found in western part of Uganda. This period is preferred because it is regarded as a period when teaching of entrepreneurship was highly emphasized by the selected universities as a contribution to the country in training students that are self-employed as opposed to job seeking with an intention of reducing unemployment in the country. It is also important to note that this is the period when many Institutions of higher learning emphasized the teaching of entrepreneurship course in their major courses as a competitive advantage to acquire more students. Only graduates that studied entrepreneurship in their courses were selected to participate in the study. Total population was 450 that participated in first phase of the study and in phase two a total of 10 participants were selected for the qualitative study.

Sampling procedure

Purposive sampling was used in this study. Teddlie & Yu (2007) revealed that in a study involving schools, schools can be purposively selected, then both the survey and non-survey data collection methods be used in selecting subjects to participate in the study. Therefore, in this study two universities were purposively selected targeting graduates that studied entrepreneurship in their courses which were also purposively selected to participate in the study. Lists of graduates were picked from academic registrars offices in the selected Universities to participate in the study. Then stratified random sampling using different courses undertaken by graduates was used to ensure affair representation. A large representative sample using simple random sampling technique in which each individual in the population had an equal probability of being selected was used. This was appropriate for this study in which the objective was to collect more quantitative data to generalize findings from the sample to the population (Creswell, 2014). In this study, a total sample of 450 using Krejcie and Morgan table (1970) was used. A questionnaire was administered to generate more quantitative data for generalization within the population of the study in the first phase and eight members of graduates from all sampled Universities were selected to be interviewed. Additionally, in the two selected Universities, a Vice Chancellor (VC) was selected, and where the VC was absent or not willing to participate in the study, the Deputy Vice Chancellor (DVC) in charge of academics was selected as key informants, making the number interviewed ten. The VCs were included in the study because they were taken to be knowledgeable about the idea of introducing and emphasizing entrepreneurship training in the courses taught in their respective Institutions and therefore gave rich and more detailed information. Participants were located and accessed using their contact phones that were also accessed from the university records. Those who could not be accessed, snowball sampling technique was used.

Research Instruments

Data was collected using a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire comprised of two sections. Section one comprised of background data on nature and sex of respondents. Section two comprised of statements on self-employment. Section two contained statements that were responded to using a 5 point likert scale, strongly agree=5, Agree=4, Neutral=3, Disagree=2, strongly disagree=1. The coefficient alpha of reliability of section two using Cronbach alpha technique was 0.76 which confirms the internal consistence of the instrument used to collect the data (Hajizabath & Asghari, 2011). Trustworthiness was guaranteed in qualitative data where the researcher constantly referred to verbatim expressions of participants, thus providing primary data which every reader could use to assess the accuracy of conclusions reached. Trustworthiness and the credibility of the study depended on its truth value, consistency and transferability.

IV. METHODS OF ANALYSIS

Descriptive statistics using mean ratings was used to analyze the quantitative data in achieving research objective. To make the analysis more explicit the mean for items was computed to aid the analysis. In this study, a mean of 5.0 means that all participants agreed with the statements put to them, a mean of above 3.0, indicates majority of participants are in agreement on the statements put to them, a mean of below 3.0 indicates majority

of the participants are in disagreement and a mean of 3.0 indicates that participants were neutral. Quantitative data analysis was complemented by qualitative data analysis to get a deeper understanding of the problem under investigation.

V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The study tried to find out graduates that were in self-employment after completion of their courses in which entrepreneurship course was taught. The elicited findings are shown in table 1.

Table 1: Descriptive results of Graduates that Studied Entrepreneurship and self-Employment

Self-employment	Mean	Remarks
Majority of graduates that have acquired entrepreneurship training are creating their own jobs	2.71	Disagree
Graduates that have studied entrepreneurship have acquired enough knowledge, skills and attitude change that have enabled them start up and their businesses	2.67	Disagree
Graduates that have studied entrepreneurship have resource mobilization skills that have enabled them to fund their business start-ups	2.18	Disagree
Graduates that have studied entrepreneurship have started their own businesses and are sustainably managing them	2.09	Disagree
Graduates of entrepreneurship education are innovators of business ideas which has enabled them to be competitive in business world	2.45	Disagree
Graduates of entrepreneurship education start businesses based on well written business plans that give clear guidance on business operations	2.68	Disagree
Graduates of entrepreneurship are equipped with financial management skills that are vital for managing businesses	2.34	Disagree
Most graduates that studied entrepreneurship are in self employment	2.54	Disagree

Table 1 shows that majority of the respondents disagreed that graduates of entrepreneurship are in self-employment. This is because their mean response were less than three (3). The findings seem to reveal that much as Universities are teaching entrepreneurship to equip students with knowledge, skills and attitude to change graduates mind set from training to searching for jobs to training to creating jobs, majority of graduates are not on self-employment (Mean=2.54). The reasons for this explanation is that entrepreneurship education does not equip graduates with innovative business ideas that enable them to start and run businesses and be competitive in the business world (Mean=2.45). The findings further tends to reveal that graduates of entrepreneurship are not equipped with financial management skills that are vital for managing businesses (Mean=2.34). Much as businesses need to be developed and run systematically guided by the business plans that are well written, including the resources needed to start and run businesses, the findings seem to suggest that graduates are not taught on how to practically develop business plans (Mean=2.68). This finding tend to suggest that teaching of entrepreneurship in Universities has remained theoretical as opposed to practical, equipping students with only knowledge that helps them to memorize and pass examination other than equipping them with both knowledge, skills and attitude that are vital for starting up business ventures that make them self-employed.

The findings tend to reveal that few graduates are likely to start their businesses and become self-employed after completion of their courses. This analysis is supported by the findings from qualitative findings which seem to suggest that graduates intention to start their own business and become self-employed is dropped by many graduates as they embark on job searching in organizations that are already established. The participants said the following:

“When you are studying entrepreneurship subject, it tends to stimulate you into self-employment especially when you are taught how businesses are started and managed, including the benefits of becoming self-employed. However, on completing the course, the mindset changes and you feel happy when you are employed in already well-established organizations” (P1).

“Entrepreneurship education enables you to make a decision that makes you self-employment and be a manager of your own. It becomes easy when you are introduced on how to be innovative, creative and strategic thinker that makes you competitive in the business world. But when the course is over and you graduate, the mindset changes and you begin looking at yourself as hand capped in terms of resource mobilization to start a business venture and you decide to go and look for jobs in well-established organizations” (P6)

“Learning something and practicing it are two different things all together. It is only those who feel that they need to be managers of their own that go into self-employment after completing their courses” (P8).

“There are students who join the universities when they are already in businesses. It is those that can be stimulated by the entrepreneurship education to continue running and managing their businesses. So it becomes hard for some of us to conceive the idea of starting business ventures that simply because we have learnt entrepreneurship in class” (P5).

“Graduates that study entrepreneurship and practice it by starting their own businesses, most of the time do so because of the family background, either the mother or the father or both are business people and their children are also engaged in running and management of family businesses” (P3).

“Even when we have studied entrepreneurship at the university, I have found out that we lack mentors who should be encouraging us, helping us and educating us how the practical world is from the theories we learn in class. In the absence of that, some of us fear to take risks in venturing into businesses with scarce resources because we don’t know how the business will progress” (P4)

“When the lecturer was teaching how to write a business plan that guides the business operations in class, my attitude towards looking for jobs changed and I started admiring self-employment. However, when I finished, I found out that what was taught was purely theoretical and therefore could not help me write a practical business plan to guide me start a business venture. So my desire to be self-employed died away and the attitude of being employed came in and I am now looking for jobs from well-established organizations” (P3)

“Business startups need a lot of money. So much as we are taught entrepreneurship in Institutions of Higher Learning, there is no clear government policy on how to fund those graduates that come up with good innovations to be put into practice. This means graduates with their good innovations remain on paper as they search for jobs in already established enterprises” (P2).

The findings from qualitative data seem to reveal that very few graduates are in self-employment using the knowledge and skills acquired from entrepreneurship education. Majority of those interviewed seem to suggest that the teaching of entrepreneurship is based mainly on theories other than practical that emphasizes hands on. As a result, students fail to mobilize the resources and take risks to start and run businesses. Universities lack facilities to teach practical entrepreneurship since many of them lack business incubators as well as educators that are practicing entrepreneurship who should be working as role models, as couch and mentors of students. This hinders the ability of graduates to start and operate their businesses and become self-employed since they to venture into the unknown..

Conclusion and Recommendations

The purpose of this study was to assess the influence of entrepreneurship training in Institutions of higher learning on graduates’ self-employment.

The study seem to suggest that institutions of higher learning teach entrepreneurship with the intention of making graduates self-employed through knowledge and skills development, vital for enabling them start their own enterprises. However, the study findings reveal that the teaching of entrepreneurship has remained theoretical and as such students still lack the skills to practically take risks of starting up and running businesses. Institutions that teach entrepreneurship not only don’t have business incubators as practical tools for practically teaching entrepreneurship but also do not have lecturers who have successful businesses as role models and coaches to students they are teaching. This has not made entrepreneurship unique from other theoretical subjects taught in the Institutions of higher learning. Majority of graduates do not pursue the path of self-employment even when they are taught entrepreneurship in their courses. Many graduates remain with the mind set of searching for jobs from already well-established enterprises other than starting their own businesses. This is caused by the way entrepreneurship is taught in Institutions of Higher learning where facilities to teach entrepreneurship are lacking. It is also noted that graduates that come up with their innovations lack financial support since there is no clear government policy of funding and promotion of innovations. This leaves those graduates that would wish to start their businesses abandon the idea and begin to search for jobs in well-established enterprises.

The study recommended that:

- Institutions of higher learning should equip the teaching of entrepreneurship with the required facilities like putting in place business incubators to teach practical entrepreneurship. This will enable all students of entrepreneurship start a business venture as a project that should be developed as the course is still going on and by the time a student graduates, he/she should be having a well-developed business venture that can be implemented practically. This will act as a motivation that will change the mindset of searching for jobs on completion to job creation on completion
- Institutions of higher learning should partner with well-established business ventures where students can be attached as interns' throughout the whole course duration. This will impart practical skills on how to start and run businesses. This will act as a motivator for them to start and run businesses and be self-employed.
- Institutions of higher learning should enter in the memorandums of understanding to successful business owners in the country who should act as mentors and coaches to students throughout the period when students are still studying their courses and on completion they can remain attached to them for business consultations. This will motivate and encourage graduates to start up business and run them successfully
- There is need for the Institutions to involve government as development partner in training entrepreneurship by offering enough training facilities for entrepreneurship as well as putting in place funds that can be accessed by graduates that come up with good business innovations and inventions. This will act as a motivator for entrepreneurship graduates to be critical business innovators and inventors that will make them practical entrepreneurs and be self employed.

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