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EFFECT OF ACTION-BASED EXPERIENTIAL APPROACH ON BUSINESS EDUCATION STUDENTS' ENTREPRENEURIAL SKILLS ACQUISITION FOR BUSINESS OPERATION IN RIVERS STATE, NIGERIA

Musa A. Abdulkarim[i]
Dr., School of Secondary Education (Business),
Department of Accounting Education,
Federal College of Education (Tech.),
Omoku, Rivers State,
Nigeria

Abstract:
This study examines the effect of action-based experiential approach on Business education students' entrepreneurial skills acquisition for business operation in Rivers State, Nigeria. To achieve this, two research questions and two hypotheses were formulated. Quasi-experimental research design was adopted for the study. The population and sample of the study consists of 134 NCE II Business education students during the 2017/2018 academic session. The sample was selected using purposive sampling technique. Two sets of instruments namely: Action-Based Experiential Entrepreneurial Learning Activities Guide (ABEELAG) and the Entrepreneurial Skills Assessment Tool (ESAT) were designed for the study. The instruments were face validated by three lecturers from University of Uyo, Akwa-Ibom State. The reliability of stability for the ESAT was ascertained using test-retest method to test for stability of the instrument. Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMC) was computed to obtain r – value of 0.84 for the two administrations and converted using the spearman brown prophetic formula to have reliability co-efficient of 0.72. Data collected for the study were analysed using mean scores for the research questions and t-test statistics computed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20.1 to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The results show that entrepreneurial skills can be highly acquired by Business education students when action-based experiential approach is used for entrepreneurship education than when direct instruction approach is used. The results also show that there is significant difference in the mean score of students in entrepreneurial skills acquisition when taught with ABEA as against DI approach. The result also shows that male and female students do not differ significantly in entrepreneurial skills acquisition when taught with project-based experiential approach. Based on the results and conclusions drawn, it was

[i] Correspondence: email profavenue@yahoo.com

recommended among other things that a train-the-trainers workshop should be organized by institutions of higher learning for all lecturers handling entrepreneurship in business education to educate them on how to use action-based experiential approach for the practical aspect of entrepreneurship.

Keywords: experiential instructional strategy, entrepreneurship education, entrepreneurial skills and education for startup

1. Introduction

To ensure the attainment of the philosophy guiding the teaching and learning of entrepreneurship in business education at the tertiary education level which according to Abdulkarim (2018) is to empower graduates to start their own businesses after graduation, many educators are focusing their beam light on the most appropriate instructional strategy for entrepreneurship education course content. This is in order to enable them equip their students with the balanced entrepreneurship education that guarantees the acquisition of entrepreneurial knowledge, skills and attitude in a synchronized manner. According to Olokundun and Borishade (2018), experiential entrepreneurship education method is fast gaining acceptance among entrepreneurship educators. Its acceptance is informed by the fact that it supports practical learning activities in real life situation which allows for active participation of students in the learning process. Wurdinger and Carlson (2010) enumerated different approaches to experiential education such as: case studies, reality-based learning, hands-on participation, inquiry-guided learning, client-based projects, real-life projects, internship, mentoring, business games and simulations in business activities, action learning, and authentic learning. Pac and Abdulkarim (2016) noted that using any of these approaches requires the teacher to abandon his direct instructional strategy position of "Mr. know-it-all" and embrace a new position of "facilitator" of the learning process as students actively engage themselves in their learning activities.

It is important to understand that utilizing any approach of experiential instructional strategy requires the design of learning activities to suit any of the models of experiential learning as reviewed by Okafor (2014). These models are: 1 – stage model, 2 – stage model, 3 – stage model and 4 – stage model. The learning activities to be used in creating these models may also vary according to field of specialization. For instance, Kevin, Stuart, Dely, and Jon (2011) suggested that for business related fields, learning activities such as: written and live (client and/or web-based) case studies, written and live presentation of business proposal, product or service innovation problems, computer simulations on marketing research and sales activities, marketing research exercises, real-life sales activities, business games, business competition among students, and written and live creative advertising and promotion projects can be used.

Action based experiential learning as one of the experiential instructional approaches is fast gaining acceptance in the development of entrepreneurs around the globe. Evidences from researches noted that the acceptance centres of this instructional

strategy in entrepreneurs' development are based on the fact that it has proved to be effective in engaging the learners in the learning exercises (Clarke, Thorpe, Anderson & Gold, 2006). This is because while using action based learning approach, the learning is to be driven by the would-be entrepreneurs' practical needs to share experiences, to learn from others' problems and to explore practical solutions to their own problems (Pittaway, Missing, Hudson & Maragh, 2009). The central idea of the action based experiential learning model is learning through actions rather than by listening in a passive state. Vince (2008) also noted that the central idea in action learning is that of taking 'actions'. Pac and Abdulkarim (2016) noted that if entrepreneurial development programmes must be beneficial to the would-be entrepreneurs or collaborative community based entrepreneurs, traditional learning approaches which fail to address collaboration must be jettison for collaborative approaches.

According to Ivar (2014), action based experiential learning that involves creation of enterprise while still in college is a teaching technique that follows the experiential learning model which is based around the maxim '*Tell me, and I forget; show me, and I remember; involve me, and I understand*'. Although action based experiential learning has many benefits and can be used to assist entrepreneurial learning, it is not without its limitations. It can, for example, be resource intensive and time consuming (Ingram, Biermann, Cannon, Neil and Waddle, 2000). For entrepreneurship education curriculum that must strictly be implemented within a particular period, action based experiential learning can only be successful if time is set aside for students to engage appropriately in real life entrepreneurial tasks (Stewart, 2009). Likewise action learning programmes rely on effective facilitators to lead discussions and ensure underlying alignment with the sought after learning objectives (McGill and Beaty 2001). Poor facilitation is a recognised problem that can reduce the benefits of action based experiential learning (McNeill, Lawson, and Mulhaney 2012). Poor implementation of action based experiential learning as a consequence of bad facilitation can lead to learning sets becoming mere support groups (Pedler 1997).

In the light of the foregoing discourse, it would be realized that if action based experiential learning is well designed and implemented in entrepreneurship education, it may build students who are likely going to return to the entrepreneurial ideas they have practiced and start their own businesses in such areas after graduation. This is what the present Nigeria is seeking for and as such the need to research the effectiveness of this experiential learning approach on entrepreneurial skills acquisition cannot be overemphasized. It is the assumption of the researcher that if facilitated correctly and carried out well it should support business education students' entrepreneurship skills acquisition than direct instructional methods.

2. Statement of the Problem

The predominant use of direct instructional approaches such as lecture, discussion and tutorial methods to deliver the course content of entrepreneurship without any recourse for exposing students to practical entrepreneurial activities, has continued to widen the

gap between theoretical knowledge acquisition and its practical application in real life situation. This has also significantly affected the ability of most Business Education students to develop entrepreneurship skills needed for starting and sustaining entrepreneurial businesses where they cannot find paid employment like teaching. This is because most Business education students find it difficult to demonstrate their ability to use these skills in starting, maintaining and growing their own businesses. These inabilities indicate lack of adequate entrepreneurial skills development for value creation and delivery which are the major ingredients for successful business venturing and sustainability using the present project approach. Their inability is manifested in their continuous search for jobs that barely exist for years after graduation instead of mobilizing scare resources to start and maintain their own businesses.

In the light of the above discourse, there is need for continuous search for other instructional approaches that allow Business educators to concentrate more on how the students learn and what knowledge and skills they acquire during their practical entrepreneurship. This is to ensure that students acquire adequate knowledge and skills for starting and maintaining their own businesses where they cannot find paid jobs before graduation. Action-based experiential instructional approach has been suggested to concentrate more on how the students learn and what they acquire in the process. Hence, the need to examine the effect of action-based experiential instructional approach on entrepreneurial skills acquisition among Business education students in Federal College of Education (Tech.), Omoku, Rivers State cannot be overemphasized.

3. Theoretical framework

3.1 Situated-Learning Theory by Jean Lave (1988)

Situated learning theory was propounded by Jean Lave in 1988. The situated learning theory states that learning is unintentional and situated within authentic activity, context and culture. Lave opined that learning is situated, that is, it is developed within the context and culture of where the knowledge or skills would be utilized in the future. Therefore, Lave suggested that the learner has to be given learning activities to be carried out within the authentic environment where the knowledge, skills or attitude acquired will be applied in the future. The theorist noted that this would help the learners to develop the ability to utilize, interact and share knowledge with others in authentic activities related to the course content in the environment it would be used. This would also enable them also establish networks for success in the authentic work environment. Lave explained that it is through this process the learner becomes more active and engaged with work culture and eventually becomes an expert of the activities.

Lave's theory explains how learning activities in an ideal environment affects learner's acquisition of competencies related to the future jobs. The learning activities based on this theory is far in contrast with the normal classroom environment learning activities that mostly involves abstract knowledge acquisition which is and out of the context of the job to be done. The learning activities based on situated learning theory

must ensure the use of knowledge in an authentic context that is, setting and application. Therefore, this theory provides educators with the understanding of the effect of learning activities in authentic context on learners' mastery of skills and knowledge related to the activities.

This theory is related to the present study because it would guide the researcher in the design of action based experiential learning activities which the learners would embark on in order to develop experiences and learn through reflection, conceptualization, expert advice and active experimentation previously learnt concept and principles. It is therefore the expectation of the researcher that these situational activities learners are exposed to will prompt their acquisition of entrepreneurial skills as they use their mental and physical abilities in the process of learning.

3.2 Purpose of the Study

The major purpose of this study is to examine the effect of action-based experiential approach on Business education students' entrepreneurial skills acquisition for business operation in Rivers State, Nigeria. To achieve this, the following research questions were posed to guide the study:

1) What is the difference in mean scores of students in entrepreneurial skills acquisition when taught with action-based experiential approach as against those taught with direct instructional approach?
2) What is the difference in mean scores of male and female students in entrepreneurial skills acquisition when taught with action-based experiential approach?

3.3 Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were posed to guide the study and tested at 0.05 level of significance:

H_{01}: There is no significant difference in mean scores of students in entrepreneurial skills acquisition when taught with action-based experiential approach as against those taught with direct instructional approach.

H_{02}: There is no significant difference in the mean scores of male and female students in entrepreneurial skills acquisition when taught with action-based experiential approach.

4. Methods

This study adopts quasi-experimental research design with post-test, non-randomized groups. The population of the study consists of 134 NCE II Business education students during the 2017/2018 academic session who were to study entrepreneurship education and are expected to undertake practical entrepreneurship activities. The sample of the study consists of all the 134 NCE II Business education students during the 2017/2018 academic session made up of 72 Accounting option students and 62 Office Technology and Management (OTM) option students respectively. Purposive sampling technique

was used in selecting the participants for the study based on the following criteria: (1) that the participants are in NCE II, and (2) that the participants have passed Business education practicum course (BED 215). This sampling technique was deemed appropriate because of the use of intact classes and criteria for pre-qualification to be part of the participants. The OTME option students were used for the action-based experiential group while direct instructional group has the accounting option students.

Two sets of instruments were developed by the researcher for the purpose of this study. These include one action-based experiential entrepreneurial learning activities guide (ABEELAG) and one entrepreneurial skills assessment tool (ESAT). *ABEELAG*: Action based Experiential Entrepreneurial Learning Activities Guide contains three stages experiential entrepreneurial learning activities guide that was carried out by the students in the groups. This guide leads to a 3 – stages experiential entrepreneurial learning activities model structured as follows: write a business plan for the production of product using locally generated resources to solve a market need (stage 1) – identify threats to the implementation of the plan and brainstorm in order to ascertain best alternative solution to plan implementation (stage 2) – implement the plan using identified best alternative and produce the product for commercialization (stage 3).

The instruments were subjected to face validity by an expert in Educational Measurement and Evaluation in the Faculty of Education and two lecturers of Business education, all from University of Uyo, Akwa-Ibom State. The reliability of stability for Action Based Experiential Entrepreneurial Learning Activities Guide (ABEEALG) and Entrepreneurial Skill Assessment Tool (ESAT) was ascertained using test-retest method. The test-retest was done in an interval of two weeks using group 15 NCE III Business Education students who are not part of the study but had been taught business education practicum. The correlation between the two administrations of ABEELAG and ESAT was computed using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 20.0 to obtain a Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMC) r – value of 0.84. The r value was converted using the spearman brown prophetic formula to have reliability co-efficient of 0.72.

4.1 Research Procedures

The researcher who doubled also as the course lecturer for Entrepreneurship in Business Education (BED220) during the 2017/2018 academic session, first delivered lectures to all the groups involved in the study within a time frame of six weeks. In the sixth week, the researcher also searched for two successful entrepreneurs within the host community for the purpose of providing expert advice to the students in the Action-Based Experiential Approach (ABEA) group. At the end of the lectures, the researchers gave the Business education students in OTME option the ABEELAG to start their practical entrepreneurship learning activities. The students were required to meet once every week for a period of six weeks. The Business education students in accounting option were also asked to carryout same practical entrepreneurship without need to report back to the facilitator till at the end during product defense. Students in the action-based experiential approach group were required to report back their

progress and challenges on weekly basis for discussion in a larger group. Each of the students in ABEAG was assessed at two intervals namely: during weekly classroom discussion and during product sample defense. While students in the direct instructional approach group were assessed all during product sample defense.

The data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics of mean scores to answer the research questions. The null hypotheses were tested using t-test at 0.05 level of significance. For the purpose of decision making related to answering the research questions, the group with the highest cluster mean score on each of the entrepreneurial skills assessed in whose favour a Mean Difference (MD) is obtained would be adjudged the best group. In interpreting the result, any mean score of 2 point and above is deemed High Acquired (HA) and below 2 points is deemed Moderate Acquired (MA). In testing the null hypotheses, the decision for testing t-test computed with SPSS was applied.

5. Results and Discussions

Research Question 1: What is the difference in mean scores of students in entrepreneurial skills acquisition when taught with action-based experiential approach as against those taught with direct instructional approach?

Table 1: Mean Scores of Students' Entrepreneurial Skills Acquisition

S/N	Items	Experimental ABEAG		Control DI		M.D	Decision
		n	$\bar{X}$	N	$\bar{X}$		
1.	Opportunity recognition skills	62	2.58	74	2.36	0.22	
2.	Creativity skills	62	2.37	74	1.99	0.38	
3.	Risk taking skills	62	2.23	74	1.92	0.31	
4.	Marketing skills	62	2.42	74	1.84	0.58	
5	Business management skills	62	2.21	74	1.81	0.40	
6	Financial records keeping skills	62	1.87	74	2.01	0.14	
7.	Business communication skills	62	2.18	74	2.03	0.15	
	Cluster mean		**2.27**		**1.99**	**0.28**	**HA**

Source: Field Work, 2018.

The result in Table 1 shows that students in Action-Based Experiential Approach (ABEAG) group highly acquired entrepreneurial skills with a mean difference score of 0.28 and a cluster mean of 2.27 respectively as against those in DI group who had a cluster mean of 1.99. This means that entrepreneurial skills as assessed in this study can be highly acquired by Business education students when exposed to experiential entrepreneurial activities that allow for real life experiences through action-based experiential entrepreneurship education than through direct-based instruction entrepreneurship education.

Research question 2: There is no significant difference in the mean scores of male and female students in entrepreneurial skills acquisition when taught with action-based experiential approach.

Table 2: Mean Scores of Male and Female Students' Entrepreneurial Skills Acquisition in ABEAG

S/N	Items	Experimental Male		Experimental Female		M.D	Decision
		N	$\bar{X}$	n	$\bar{X}$		
1.	Opportunity recognition skills	28	1.75	34	1.97		
2.	Creativity skills	28	2.29	34	2.09		
3.	Risk taking skills	28	2.29	34	2.09		
4.	Marketing skills	28	2.46	34	2.59		
5	Business management skills	28	2.25	34	2.44		
6	Financial records keeping skills	28	1.93	34	2.00		
7.	Business communication skills	28	2.07	34	1.97		
	Cluster mean		**2.15**		**2.16**	**0.01**	**HA**

Source: Field Survey, 2018.

The result in Table 2 shows that female students in Action-Based Experiential Approach (ABEA) group highly acquired entrepreneurial skills with a mean difference score 0.01 and a cluster mean of 2.16 respectively as against their male counterpart in ABEA group who had a cluster mean of 2.15. This means that entrepreneurial skills as measured in this study can be highly acquired by female Business education students when exposed to experiential entrepreneurial activities that allow for real life experiences than their male counterparts exposed to same activities.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in mean scores of students in entrepreneurial skills acquisition when taught with action-based experiential approach as against those taught with direct instructional approach.

Table 3: t-test Analysis of Mean Scores of Students' Entrepreneurial Skills Acquisition in Action-Based Experiential Approach group and Direct Instructional Approach group ($N_1 = 62$, $N_2 = 72$)

S/N	Items	Experimental PBEA		Control DI		df	T	Sig. P≤.05	Decision
		X_1	SD_1	X_2	SD_2				
1.	Opportunity recognition skills	2.58	.56	2.36	.51	134	-2.35	0.02	
2.	Creativity skills	2.37	.75	1.99	.31	134	-4.02	0.00	
3.	Risk taking skills	2.23	.64	1.92	.28	134	-3.75	0.00	
4.	Marketing skills	2.42	.64	1.84	.47	134	-6.10	0.00	
5.	Business management skills	2.21	.66	1.81	.59	134	-3.73	0.00	
6.	Financial records keeping skills	1.87	.59	2.01	.31	134	1.81	0.07	
7.	Business communication skills	2.18	.67	2.03	.23	134	-1.82	0.07	
	Cluster t-test	15.86	4.51	13.96	2.70	134	-2.85	0.02	S

Source: Field Work, 2018.

The results in Table 3 show that the null hypothesis of no significant difference in the mean scores of students in entrepreneurial skills acquisition when taught with action-based experiential approach as against those taught with direct-based instructional approach is rejected at cluster t ratio -2.85, degree of freedom 134 and p value of 0.02 which is less than the level of significance at 0.05. This means that there is significant difference in the mean score of students in entrepreneurial skills acquisition when taught with ABEA as against DI approach.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference in the mean scores of male and female students in entrepreneurial skills acquisition when taught with action-based experiential approach.

Table 4: t-test Analysis of Mean Scores of Male and Female Students' Entrepreneurial Skills Acquisition in Action-Based Experiential Approach group ($N_1 = 28$, $N_2 = 34$)

S/N	Items	Experimental ABEA		Control PBEA		Df	T	Sig. P≤.05	Decision
		X_1	SD_1	X_2	SD_2				
1.	Opportunity recognition skills	1.75	.44	1.97	.67	60	-1.80		
2.	Creativity skills	2.29	.76	2.09	.57	60	1.01		
3.	Risk taking skills	2.29	.66	2.09	.52	60	0.53		
4.	Marketing skills	2.46	.58	2.59	.56	60	1.07		
5.	Business management skills	2.25	.52	2.44	.56	60	-0.43		
6.	Financial records keeping skills	1.93	.26	2.00	.25	60	1.47		
7.	Business communication skills	1.75	.44	1.97	.17	60	-1.05		
	Cluster t-test	11.85	2.23	11.51	1.87	134	0.11	0.34	NS

Source: Field Work, 2018.

The results in Table 4 show that the null hypothesis of no significant difference in the mean scores of male and female students in entrepreneurial skills acquisition when taught with action-based experiential approach is accepted at cluster t ratio 0.11, degree of freedom 60 and p value of 0.34 which is greater than the level of significance at 0.05. This means that there is no significant difference in the mean score of male and female students in entrepreneurial skills acquisition when taught with ABEA.

6. Discussion of Findings

The results related to research question 1 showed that entrepreneurial skills as assessed in this study can be highly acquired by Business education students when exposed to experiential entrepreneurial activities that allow for real life experiences through action-based experiential entrepreneurship education than through direct instructional entrepreneurship education. The test of hypothesis related to these results also shows that there is significant difference in the mean score of students in entrepreneurial skills acquisition when taught with ABEA as against DI approach. The reason for the significant difference between the entrepreneurial skills acquisition of students in

action-based experiential entrepreneurship education and direct instructional entrepreneurship education can be traced to the fact that students were guided at different stages of their real life entrepreneurial activities by experienced instructors and entrepreneurs from the host community. Therefore, there was co-creation effect on the students' entrepreneurial skills acquisition which the direct instructional group students did not enjoy since they were left to their own efforts in actualizing the real-life entrepreneurial learning activities. These findings is supported by the findings

The findings of the study also revealed that female and male business education students do not significantly differ in their acquisition of entrepreneurial skills when taught with action-based experiential entrepreneurship education. The reason why both gender entrepreneurial skills do not significantly differ in their entrepreneurial skills acquisition using this instructional approach can be traced to the fact that they were all given same task which have significance relevance to their future aspiration of becoming a self-reliant entrepreneur for social and economic reasons.

6.1 Educational implication of the study

The findings point to the fact that Business educators implementing the entrepreneurship in business education course content need jettison the predominantly used direct instructional strategy and embrace the use of action-based experiential instruction approach. The ABEA needs to be designed based on the three stages of real life entrepreneurial learning activities as used in this study. Therefore, there is need for a train-the-trainers' workshop on the use of action-based approach in entrepreneurship education in Nigerian tertiary institutions in order to expose lecturers to how to design and utilize the ABEA for implementing entrepreneurship curriculum.

7. Conclusion

It can be concluded based on the findings of this study that ABEA is an effective approach of assisting Business education students to acquire entrepreneurial skills that will be of significant to their future business operations. This is due to the fact that it enables the students to acquire more entrepreneurial skills than the direct instructional approach. It is also concluded that ABEA is an effective approach for both gender of students since both male and female students do not differ significantly in their acquisition of entrepreneurial skills through this approach. Therefore, the use of ABEA in actualizing the basic objective of introducing entrepreneurship in Business education cannot be overemphasized.

7.1 Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study and the conclusions drawn, the following recommendations are put forward for implementation:

1) That business educators who are saddled with the responsibility of implementing the entrepreneurship in business education course content be

exposed to a train-the-trainers workshop on how to use action-based experiential instructional approach to facilitate the practical aspect of entrepreneurship;

2) That Business educators saddled with the responsibilities of implementing the entrepreneurship education course content should utilize ABEA based to facilitate students' acquisition of entrepreneurial knowledge and skills.
3) That tertiary institutions administrator should provide all the needed supports for facilitating the use of practical entrepreneurship activities especially through action-based learning approach to help students acquire entrepreneurial knowledge and skills simultaneously.

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