

Relevant Educational Qualifications for Entrepreneurship Lecturers in Higher Learning Institutions (HLIs): A study of HLIs in Malaysia and Nigeria

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Abstract

Entrepreneurship education has gained an important role in the eyes of both policy makers, as well as researchers across the globe. The effects of the sudden growth can be felt through the increasing support provided by governments especially in the higher learning institutions. This recent rapid growth and development in entrepreneurship courses and programs may be due to the belief that the entrepreneurial competencies required for successful venturing can be taught, or at the very least enhanced by entrepreneurial education and learning. Despite the monumental international growth of the discipline over the last three decades, no significant empirical work has been conducted on the lecturers' relevant educational qualifications necessary for effective teaching of entrepreneurship courses. This study is therefore, aimed at identifying the most relevant educational qualifications needed by lecturers teaching entrepreneurship courses in Higher Learning Institutions (HLIs) for both Malaysia and Nigeria. The data was collected through quantitative research approach using a structured questionnaire developed from extensive literature, involving five (5) point Likert

Scale. As the study focus on lectures teaching entrepreneurship courses, the purposive sampling technique was used to determine the sample of the study. A total of 237 and 383 entrepreneurship lecturers in Malaysian and Nigerian higher learning institutions participated in the survey respectively. The results obtained from this study indicated that three most relevant educational qualifications needed for lecturers who teaching entrepreneurship courses, for both countries were identified. These include Higher Degree in Management, Higher Degree in Management Related Courses and Higher Professional Degree in Entrepreneurship. It is hoped that the result will provide some basis for HLIs in designing the relevant policies that can enhance the quality and effectiveness of the teaching of entrepreneurship courses for Malaysia and Nigeria.

Keywords: *Entrepreneurship, Entrepreneurship Education, Educational Qualifications, Higher Learning Institutions.*

I. INTRODUCTION

The entrepreneurship education as a field of study has been spreading over the last few decades at a considerable pace. Courses are being implemented in universities and virtually at all levels of educational institutions across the globe. At HLIs programs are being developed specifically to take care of the needs of their entrepreneurial students. When these wide spreads development of entrepreneurship education are taken into account, one may likely concludes that the theoretical bases of entrepreneurship education may be solidly established. Nevertheless, this is not the true situation on the ground. Authors such as Ardalan (2008) have claimed that entrepreneurship education has to be considered as an extension of entrepreneurship itself. Therefore, any attempt to define

the former has to be based on a view of the latter. Based on the above, it is now evident that entrepreneurship education can mean many different things to different people.

Despite the importance of entrepreneurship education, the effectiveness of the teaching techniques for entrepreneurship as well the lecturers' disposition and skills are still unknown. In fact, the calibers of lecturers who are teaching the courses are not known to the policy makers due to limited resources and researches in the field. For example, Kirby (2002) opined that the teaching of entrepreneurship courses remains relatively underdeveloped, despite the growing demand for more entrepreneurial-oriented graduates. The result of neglecting the teaching aspect is that most of the lecturers of entrepreneurship education do not

have the relevant entrepreneurship qualification and necessary competencies to teach the courses. Furthermore, Binks et. al., (2006) also argued that understanding and developing entrepreneurship education requires an integrated research and teaching efforts.

Peltonen (2008) emphasizes that it is very vital for lecturers to become more entrepreneurial if entrepreneurial learning should be improved among students. Particularly, lecturers need to act in an entrepreneurial way in discovering opportunities and innovatively exploiting them. Entrepreneurship lecturers should apply innovative teaching methods, cope with various challenges of teaching entrepreneurship and engage students in the process and challenges of entrepreneurship learning (Adedoyin, 2010). Furthermore, entrepreneurship lecturers should have a strong motivation to teach and maintain their motivation through the whole process of instructional delivery (Fiet, 2000), self-efficacy highly improves teachers' motivation and abilities to teach (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998).

Nevertheless, for the last three decades, no significant empirical work has been conducted on the lecturers' relevant educational qualifications for effective teaching of entrepreneurship courses. Therefore, this paper highlighted issues that need to be considered for achieving excellence entrepreneurial teaching in Higher Learning Institutions (HLIs) by lecturers. The central focus of this paper is to identify the most relevant educational qualifications needed for entrepreneurship lecturers. It is believed that without educationally qualified lecturers of entrepreneurship courses, promoting entrepreneurship as a mean of wealth and employment creation will never be realized.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. What is entrepreneurship?

Entrepreneurship has been seen as an important component within contemporary economic development of a nation. Shane and Venkataraman (2000) defined entrepreneurship as a process through which opportunities to create future goods and services are discovered, evaluated and exploited. They argue that the field of entrepreneurship involves the study of sources of opportunities; the process of discovery, evaluation, and exploitation of opportunities.

According to Bula and Tiagha (2012), entrepreneurship is a business venture that is engaged in value addition through the production and sale of goods and provision of services as an attempt to take advantage of a business opportunity that might entail some risk but that

provides for self-employment and making money to support themselves and their families. Baba (2013) on the other had defined entrepreneurship as the act of starting a business, arranging business deals and taking risks in order to make profit through the education skills acquired. The entrepreneurship spirit is a pre-requisite to an entrepreneurial society and culture. Therefore, its critical role to the economy of nations is now widely acknowledged within the literature such as a major source of innovation, job creation and growth.

B. What is Entrepreneurship Education?

Entrepreneurship education is defined as the process of providing individuals with the ability to recognize opportunities and the insight, self-esteem, knowledge, and skills to act on them (Jones,2007). The consortium for entrepreneurship education (2008), states that entrepreneurship education is not just about teaching someone to run a business. More importantly it is about encouraging creative thinking and promoting a strong sense of self-worth and empowerment. Through entrepreneurship education, students learn how to create business, but they also learn a lot more. The core knowledge created via entrepreneurship education includes: the ability to identify business opportunities in one's life; the ability to pursue opportunities, by generating new ideas and initiate the needed recourses; the ability to create and operate a new firm; and the ability to think in an innovative and important manner (Shane, 2011).

Generally, entrepreneurial education can be categorized into three different approaches (O'Connor, 2013). The first approach is the teaching "about" entrepreneurship which basically laid more emphasis on the theoretical aspect of the teaching of the subject that aimed to give a general understanding of the phenomenon. The second approach which is the teaching "for" entrepreneurship simply means an occupationally oriented approach aiming at developing entrepreneurs the requisite knowledge and skills. This approach is more or less concern about the practical aspect of acquiring the entrepreneurial competencies that are necessary for new venture creation. Finally the third approach is the teaching "through" entrepreneurship which means a process based on experiential approach where students go through an actual entrepreneurial learning process through the formal education. In some cases the way entrepreneurial education is carried out in practice varies substantially, primarily depending on which definition is used (Ernest, 2010), but also depending on what underlying educational paradigm is applied (Ardalan, 2008).

It is very important to note that beside knowledge and skills in business, entrepreneurship education is also about the development of certain basic beliefs, values and attitudes, with the aim to get students to really consider entrepreneurship as an attractive and valid alternative to paid employment or unemployment (Raposa et al., 2008). One of the most

precise definitions of entrepreneurship in educational context is- the ability of an individual possessing a range of essential skills and attributes, to make a unique, innovative and creative contribution in the world of work, whether in employment or self-employment. Some definitions of entrepreneurship education is provided in Table 1.

Table 1: Summary of Definitions of Entrepreneurship Education

Year	Name of the author(s)	Definitions
1984	Sexton and Brown	Is an extension of entrepreneurship
2004	Alberti et al	Structured conveyance of entrepreneurial competencies
2007	Jones	Ability to recognize opportunities and the insight, self-esteem, knowledge and skills to act on them.
2008	Rapaso et al	The development of beliefs, values and attitudes
2008	Consortium for entrepreneurship education	It encourages creative thinking and promotes strong sense of self-worth and empowerment.
2010	Mwasalwiba	An individual’s ability, skills, creativity and work.
2011	Shane	Liberal arts of business education

C. What would be the Relevant Educational Qualification for Entrepreneurship Lecturers?

The educational qualification possessed by an individual is regarded by the education researchers across the globe as one of the most important factors that can enhance the lecturers’ teaching performance. The lecturers’ educational qualification or level of education is defined as the highest educational degree obtained by a lecturer. In many countries like Malaysia highly qualified university lecturers must have minimum of a PhD degree. In Nigeria and most African countries a minimum of Master’s degree is acceptable to be a university lecturer. However, because most of the teachers in the developed countries have a bachelor’s degree in secondary schools, more recent studies have focused on whether teacher or lecturers with a master’s degrees or greater can have a significantly greater impact on student performance or (Greenberg et al., 2004).

In order to promote lecturers’ performance and effectiveness, it is very important to determine whether the level of education can significantly influence effective teaching performance. Such understanding will help the development of new intervention in the teaching of entrepreneurship education in higher learning institutions. In an effort to improve student achievement and performance, some educational researchers have focused on the development of highly skilled and qualified lecturers. Researchers and policy makers alike have regarded improving lecturers’ quality especially through acquiring higher relevant degrees as an important way to improve student performance (Zhang & Sternberg, 2008).

There is wide believes among educational researchers that improving lecturer’ quality is the number one way to improve the quality of students in educational institutions. The rationale behind this idea is that lecturers’ quality is adjustable factors that can be improved through education and training. For instance, lecturers may be required to present certain qualifications or competencies in order to be eligible for employment. In some situations, external intervention and training programs could also be required for the already employed lecturers to retain their current employment (Zang & Sternberg, 2008). Therefore, academics have focused on improving lecturers’ educational qualifications as a way to improve student performance. Study of Zhang and Sternberg (2008) shown that lecturers’ who possesses advanced degree in science or education as an individual variable (direct relationship), contributed to higher student achievement in science. The result implies that highly educated lecturers are indeed more successful lecturers in terms of student outcomes. In another study, Kalu et al., (2012) revealed that the academic qualification found to be as one of the most important predictors of teachers’ ability to understand and teach a subject effectively. He further argued that it is essential for students to be given opportunities to study in the company of well educationally qualified teachers. However, the study concludes that academic qualification does have little significant influence on teachers’ perception. This could be attributed to the nature of elementary education teachers’ training programs that make no provision for specialization in any specific area of study. The findings concluded that no matter what the

subject was, an increase in level of education will be accompanied by better teaching performance and students' achievements he concluded.

It is now established beyond reasonable doubt that there is a positive relationship between lecturers' level of education and their teaching performance. This is based on the belief that the higher the educational qualifications a lecturer possessed the greater his teaching performance may be (Ye, 2000).

III. METHODOLOGY

This study employed a quantitative approach since it is used for a descriptive research and where necessary it creates "standardized questions that can be interpreted the same way by all respondents (Kumar, 2005). The data was collected using a structured questionnaire developed from extensive literature, involving 5 point Likert Scale. The sample of this study were selected based on purposive sampling techniques where each respondent was selected based on his track records and expertise in the field of entrepreneurship education courses in their respective institutions. A total of 237 and 383 entrepreneurship lecturers in Malaysia and Nigerian higher learning institutions participated in the survey respectively. Descriptive statistics was performed to identify the most relevant entrepreneurial competencies needed by the lecturers teaching entrepreneurship courses. Percentages and mean score rates as well as standard deviations were calculated based on the 5point Likert-scale. The percentage and

mean score rates provide the views and opinions of the respondents in numerical values expressed in percentage.

IV. FINDINGS

A. Relevant Educational Qualifications for Entrepreneurship Lecturers for Malaysian HLIs

Table 2 summarizes the respondents' rated on each of the five (5) educational qualifications that they considered as the most relevant for the lecturers of entrepreneurship in Malaysia HLIs. The table clearly indicated that the respondents have identified three different educational qualifications they have considered as the most relevant qualifications for lecturers teaching entrepreneurship must possessed in order to teach the entrepreneurship courses effectively. The Higher Degree in Management in has highest mean scores of 4.81 and it was closely followed by Higher Degree in Entrepreneurship and Higher Degree in Management with the mean scores of 4.78 and 4.66 respectively. A minimum of master's degree in any field has the lowest mean scores of 4.30. The findings from the above table clearly indicated that the most relevant qualification an entrepreneurship lecturer needs to possess is higher degree in management which is followed by professional degree in entrepreneurship courses. The teaching of entrepreneurship courses can only be effective when the lecturers teaching the courses have the relevant educational qualifications as supported in the literature.

Table 2: Relevant Educational Qualifications for Entrepreneurship Lecturers in Malaysia (N=237)

Types of qualification	Mean	SD
Higher Degree in Management	4.81	1.098
Higher Degree in Entrepreneurship	4.78	0.986
Higher Degree in Management Related Courses	4.66	0.996
Good Higher Degree non Mgt. Courses	4.65	1.026
Good First Degree/HND	4.38	1.029
Engineering/Technical Qualifications	4.33	1.029
Min of Master's Degree in any Field	4.30	1.116

B. Relevant Educational qualification for Entrepreneurship Lecturers for Nigeria HLIs

The results from the Table 3 indicated that the professional degree in entrepreneurship education (mean 4.50) rated as the most relevant educational qualification for the teaching of entrepreneurship education in Nigerian HLIs. The respondents also rated

higher degree in management with a mean score of 4.19 as the second most relevant educational qualification required by the entrepreneurship lecturers. Good higher degree in non-management courses has the lowest mean scores of 4.01. The respondents have unanimously identified three educational qualifications as the most

relevant educational qualification for all lecturers teaching entrepreneurship courses.

Table 3: Relevant Educational Qualifications for Entrepreneurship Lecturers in Nigeria (N=383)

Types of qualification	Mean	SD
Higher degree in Entrepreneurship	4.50	1.483
Higher Degree in Management	4.19	1.787
Higher Degree in Management Related Courses	4.13	1.638
Good First Degree/HND	4.07	1.736
Engineering/Technical Qualifications	4.06	1.404
Good Higher Degree not Mgt. Courses	4.01	1.629
Min of Master's Degree in Any Field	4.02	1.584

The findings from both countries shown that the respondents have rated three educational qualifications (Higher Degree in Entrepreneurship education, Higher Degree in Management Courses and Higher Degree in Management Related Courses) as the most relevant educational qualifications for the teaching of entrepreneurship courses in higher learning institutions in Nigerian HLIs. This clearly supported the earlier findings in the literature that agreed that lecturers in HLIs needed some basic relevant educational qualifications to enable them teach entrepreneurship courses effectively.

V. DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

This paper has identified some educational qualifications that are considered to be relevant for lecturers teaching entrepreneurship in HLIs that need to be possessed in order to improve performance and students' achievements. Findings from previous literatures and studies have indicated that lecturers' level of education have significant influence on teaching performance and students achievement. Academics and policy makers have agreed that lecturers possessing relevant higher educational qualifications are one of the surest ways to improve their teaching performance. In a study conducted by Zhang and Sternberg (2008) showed that an increase in lectures' level of education will implied an increase in students' achievement. The findings in this paper has concurred with the previous findings from the literature that there is significant positive relationship between higher educational qualifications and lecturers' teaching performance.

The results revealed Higher Degree in Entrepreneurship has been rated as the most relevant educational qualification for lecturers' teaching

entrepreneurship courses. The result indicated that Higher Degree in Entrepreneurship has the highest mean score rates of 4.50 indicating that it is the relevant higher educational qualifications lecturers teaching entrepreneurship need to possess in order to improve their teaching performance. This finding is also consistent with the findings in the literature that showed highly educated lecturers are more successful in terms of students' achievements (Kalu et al., 2012). Finding from this study has also concurred with the finding by Zhang and Sternberg (2008) which showed lecturers who possessed higher degree in science teaches better than those with lower educational qualifications.

The finding implied that lecturers with higher educational qualifications can positively influence students' achievement in any area of human endeavors. It can be concluded that despite diversity in country background and development, the respondents in the same opinion that entrepreneurship lecturers should possess relevant entrepreneurship qualification.

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