

Influence Of Experiential Learning On Entrepreneurial Self Efficacy Of University Students

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Abstract

The value of knowledge emanating from universities should empower their graduates to transform their societies by addressing the unique challenges they face in a sustainable manner. The paper examined how Experiential Learning (EL) influences the Entrepreneurial Self Efficacy (ESE) of university students. The theoretical underpinnings in this work are; competency-based theory, theory of constructivist learning and constructionism learning theory. Cross sectional design was applied to find out the relationship between EL and ESE. The respondents were drawn from universities students within the two counties with largest number of higher institution of learning. Linear regression was used to show the relationship between EL and ESE. It was found that EL has a positive influence ESE. There is need to provide practical exposure activities through the application of EL in universities to foster ESE for promotion of equitable and inclusive development leading to sustainable progress.

Keywords: Experiential Learning, Entrepreneurial Self Efficacy, Innovation and Sustainable Development.

INTRODUCTION

Universities are the pillars of human development. The value of education provided by these institutions should transcend to the entire society and the economy. This can be realized by fostering the Entrepreneurial Self Efficacy (ESE) of university students. Graduates with higher ESE are more likely to propel the economy to greater heights of development by driving corporate entrepreneurship for those absorbed in the industry. The rest can set up innovative enterprises that can be a game changer in the market thus addressing unemployment which is in tandem with the sustainable development goals. However, this can only be realized if Entrepreneurship Education (EE) coupled with the right pedagogy is adopted by universities to produce graduates who are competent to bring about breakthrough innovations in different contexts.

Entrepreneurship Self-Efficacy

The right EE Pedagogy promotes the development of ESE. This is paramount in the development of competencies that enhance the conceptualization of complex issues, managing interdependences, critical thinking, policy formulation and implementation (Pace, 2105). The term ESE is defined as a strong belief and confidence in the learner's acquired abilities to initiate, operate and become successful in entrepreneurship (Cooper, Bottomely & Gordon, 2004). University graduates from developing countries such as Malaysia have high ESE propelling them into entrepreneurship which is likely to earn them more than those employed thus creating sustainable wealth. However, this is not always the case in Africa.

The effectiveness of EE programs in Africa can be enhanced by application of the appropriate training approach to building the requisite skills, knowledge, traits, attitudes and competence to improve ESE. The pedagogy adopted should be well thought out to achieve the goals of sustainable development.

Pedagogy is the approach or method of instruction which may either be traditional or non- traditional. Traditional methods are convention methods of teaching which include; lectures, case studies and group discussions. Non- traditional methods are non-conventional approaches to teaching where the learner is actively involved in the learning process such as experiential learning. Entrepreneurship can be taught, but EE requires the non-conventional approach of instructions.

Experiential Learning

The innovation capacity of graduates can be enhanced by the application of a progressive training approach such as Experiential Learning (EL). Experiential learning is a holistic learning delivery method that combines different learning approaches. Kipka (2012) posit that EL is a holistic interdisciplinary learning methodology that encompasses psychology, education and management. Djonke-Moore and Joseph (2016) postulated that EL is a learning experience which occurs through problem-solving, collaborations and critical thinking leading to the creation of new knowledge. Experiential Learning is, therefore, the process of developing cognitive abilities through

activities, reflection and analysis of the subject matter by providing an opportunity for experimentation in several contexts. It is a learning strategy based on experiences that help the learners to construct new knowledge.

Experiential Learning is based on utilizing experiences where learners decode new knowledge. It enriches instructional methods; it is participative, brings about curriculum development, provides exposure, promotes innovation, results in lifelong learning and transforms learning from knowledge reproduction to new knowledge creation. It makes use of feelings, thinking, reflecting and acting (Yamazaki & Kayes, 2004). It shapes the behavior and reinforces emotional memories in the learner thereby improving their retention (Moody, 2012). The approach challenge, engage and stretches the cognitive ability of the learner. However, the approach is faced by several challenges.

It is difficult to contextualize the approach in contemporary times. The approach faces resistance from instructors and learners, lack of the right technology systems, lack of lecturers' awareness about the training method, suitable only for small class sizes, time-consuming, difficulty in scaling it up and its assessment is a daunting task (Kolb & Kolb, 2008). Nevertheless, the challenges can be overcome through stakeholders participation, requisite investment and incorporating a wide range of learning activities.

Experiential learning and Entrepreneurial Self-Efficacy
There are several scholars who have attempted to link the relationship between EL and ESE. Shurville (2009) found that EL provides practical experiences which are in tandem with the reality thus fostering ESE. Moody (2012) found that EL influences the level of personal organization, effectiveness, application of new knowledge and satisfaction which is crucial in promoting ESE. Kipka (2012) is of the opinion that EL is useful in inculcating the skills and traits of entrepreneurship, development of confidence and competence, talent management, community services, leadership and change management. Furthermore, EL influences the learning of multiple concepts and perspectives which is crucial in developing ESE (Djonke- Moore & Joseph, 2016). It influences the level of personal organization, effectiveness, application of new knowledge and satisfaction which is crucial in promoting ESE (Moody, 2012). It is therefore evident that EL has a positive relationship with ESE, but it is important to find out whether the association can be replicated in universities.

Theoretical Underpinnings

The theories that best inform EL pedagogy and ESE include John Dewey (1953) competency-based theory, Piaget's (1974) theory of constructivist learning and

Papert (1993) constructionism learning theory as expounded in the foregoing discourse.

John Dewey (1953) Competency-Based Theory

The competency-based theory was propounded by John Dewey in the year 1953, but the origin of the theory can be traced from the 1920s. The theory postulates that competency is situational and personal, limited to a person's perception and character, require diverse learning styles and competency is a motivational force (Hackett, 2001). The theory has however been criticized by several scholars (Field, 2000; Hackett, 2001; Hager, 2004; Kosbab, 2003; & Roth, 2008). It is criticized for over-emphasis on high order skills which are dismissed on the account of observations and measurability (Field, 2000). This has led to the exploration of other theories that address these concerns among them, the theory of constructivists learning.

Piaget's (1974) Theory of Constructivist Learning

The theory of constructivist learning was postulated by Piaget in the year 1974. It postulates that learners derive their meaning and interpretation of new knowledge based on existing knowledge. The theory view knowledge and truth as created in the mind but not discovered (Schwandt, 2003). The trainer in this theory is not the sole authority, but guide and facilitates learning, giving and supporting the construction of knowledge. The theory posits that acquisition of knowledge is an interpersonal process. The theory is presently accepted as the more relevant education practice (Brown, 2006) but it has not escaped criticisms.

Several scholars have questioned this approach. They argue that the theory has a few empirical findings (Mayer, 2004; Kirschner, Sweller, & Clark, 2006). Learners with no entrepreneurial background may have little or have no entrepreneurial experience to draw learning from, but EE pedagogy can be designed in such a way that EL occurs as the EE program progresses by engaging in real live entrepreneurial projects. Researchers contend that knowledge is meaningful if it is contextualized (Apel, 2007). The shortcoming of this theory can be addressed by Papert (1993) constructionism learning theory.

Papert (1993) Constructionism Learning Theory

The theory is the development of Piaget's (1974) theory of constructivist learning. It is hinged on the premise that learning is the creation of a person's meanings by reconciling new knowledge with reality. The theory postulates that tangible activities are paramount in the creation of generalizations, construction of abstractions and a way through which thinking can be manifested and made public (Kynigos, 2008). The theory is comprised of emergent activities where a lot of deliberations take place. It focuses on learning how to

learn. The theory has become more relevant as learners interact with technology (Mor, Hoyles, Kahu, Noss & Simpson, 2006). The theory is appropriate in EE because learners should construct their new meanings from knowledge acquired to identify new entrepreneurial ideas and the efficacy to seize the opportunities therein. This study investigated whether EL has a significant influence on ESE.

The Conceptual Framework

The influence of EL on ESE can be illustrated through a conceptual framework. The study improved on Fayolle and Gaily (2008) model that assesses the impact of EE based on participants' institutional setting,

audience, objectives, contents, teaching approaches and methods. This study focused on training approaches that would contribute to entrepreneurial abilities manifested in ESE rather than mere entrepreneurial intentions and attitudes. Entrepreneurship self-efficacy is likely to pull more learners into entrepreneurship than entrepreneurship intentions thus its importance in contributing to innovations which can bring about sustainable development.

The elements of EL that influence ESE are depicted as the independent variable. The ESE is the predictor variable as shown in figure 2.1.



Figure 2.1: A conceptual framework of the relationship between EL and ESE

The conceptual framework shows how the EL and ESE can be linked to each other. The null hypothesis for the study was that; EL has no significant influence on ESE of university students in Kenya while the alternative hypothesis was that EL has a significant influence on ESE of university students in Kenya. Cross sectional design was applied to find out the relationship between EL and ESE. The respondents were drawn from universities students within the two counties with largest number of higher institution of learning. Purposive sampling was carried out to select the

students in their final year of study. Correlation and linear regression were used to analyse the data.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The measure of EL among the respondents was BL, PBL and TBL. The aggregate score of TBL, PBL and BL was obtained which formed the EL. Linear regression was then conducted between EL and ESE to determine their association. This is shown in table 1.

Table 1. Linear regression between EL and ESE

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	673.029	1	673.029	98.763	.000 ^b
	Residual	695.086	102	6.815		
	Total	1368.115	103			

The p-value is 0.000 which is less than 0.05 at 5% level of significant hence the null hypothesis was rejected and the null hypothesis accepted. This implies a significant influence of EL on ESE. It was therefore deduced that EL has a positive influence ESE.

CONCLUSION

The application of EL in EE is paramount in developing the ESE of university students. Higher level

of ESE is important in developing confident graduates who are able to recognise the needs in the society and develop new, viable and sustainable venture to address the gaps. This is likely to bring about value addition and improvement in innovation performance.

RECOMMENDATIONS

There is need to provide practical exposure activities which should be incorporated into the curriculum. This

can be done by the adoption of experiential learning which involves approaches such as problem-based learning which help learners to develop concepts, new knowledge and skills needed to engage in sustainable development activities. There is also need to tailor make curriculums to accommodate unique pedagogies such as peer review mechanism, playing games related to entrepreneurship, the creation of authentic tasks and artifacts, generation of business plans, guests speakers and utilization of different training approaches. This will develop memorable learning experiences which will promote long life learning.

The learner should be at the center of the learning process and should be fully involved in creating activities that will not only lead to their participation but also create new knowledge and a long lasting leaning experience that will promote life-long learning.

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