

AN ASSESSMENT OF ENTREPRENEURIAL SELF-EFFICACY AMONG TECHNICAL COLLEGE STUDENTS IN MALAWI: THE CASE OF NASAWA TECHNICAL COLLEGE.

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ABSTRACT

Entrepreneurship training influences entrepreneurial behaviour. However, one must demonstrate high levels of Entrepreneurial Self-Efficacy (ESE) to venture into an entrepreneurial lifestyle. ESE is an important measure to examine a person who can likely become an entrepreneur. This paper reports on a study to assess students' perceived entrepreneurial self-efficacy at Nasawa Technical College in Malawi. In 2006, Malawi adopted entrepreneurship education as a core technical and vocational education curriculum subject. However, since the introduction of entrepreneurship education in the technical and vocational education sector in Malawi, no study has been conducted to assess how students perceive their efficacy, and on the other hand, not all students enrolled in technical colleges have equal access to be exposed to entrepreneurship education due to multiple curricular being offered in TVET colleges in Malawi. The study's objective was to assess levels of entrepreneurial self-efficacy among students exposed to entrepreneurship education against those not exposed to entrepreneurship education. The study's null hypothesis proposed no significant differences between students exposed to entrepreneurship education and students not exposed to entrepreneurship education.

The study took a descriptive survey design. Data was collected using a Likert scale questionnaire, which had 31 items. The reliability test of the instrument achieved a scale of 0.98 on Cronbach alpha. The population of the study was 200 final-year students at Nasawa Technical College. One hundred nineteen final-year students participated in the study and were sampled from six courses: bricklaying, carpentry joinery, motor vehicle mechanics, motorcycle mechanics, general fitting and secretarial studies. SPSS v 20 software package was employed to analyse the data and computed non-parametric tests. According to Mann Whitney U test results, there was a statistically significant difference between students exposed to entrepreneurship education and those not exposed to entrepreneurship education. P value $0.000 < 0.05$ significance level, hence rejecting the null hypothesis. The findings support the literature, which says that exposure to entrepreneurship education positively impacts entrepreneurial competencies. Therefore, the study recommends that all students enrolling in Technical colleges in Malawi should be exposed to entrepreneurship education and training regardless of entry mode.

Keywords: entrepreneurship, entrepreneurship education, self-efficacy, entrepreneurial self-efficacy

INTRODUCTION

Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) is critical in equipping the youth with skills that enable them to engage in productive livelihoods. Maigida, Saba, and Namkere [2013] argue that one way to empower the youth is by providing them with adequate and quality technical and vocational education to make them self-reliant. However, the United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) paper in 2006 stressed that TVET programmes in many countries have not increased employment for a long time. Youth unemployment remains a significant challenge in many parts of the world, especially in Africa. As OECD (2004) and Schoof [2006] observed, unemployment is accelerated due to the labour market's scarcity of wage-based employment opportunities.

However, the literature argues that due to the increase in unemployment, there is a need to engage the youth in entrepreneurial activities while in school to curb unemployment worldwide. As Oosterbeek, Praag, and Ijsseletain [2008] alluded, to improve education's effectiveness and reduce youth unemployment rates among graduates, students should be exposed to entrepreneurship education in school or college. The provision of entrepreneurship education is significant. Kargwell and Inguva [2012] observed that the new world economy requires innovation, training and reinventing of formal and

informal education systems. Entrepreneurship training significantly empowers the youth to start and run businesses. Kaburi [2013] says the application of entrepreneurial competencies in daily life empowers students to learn business and enhance their social and life skills. In so doing, this fosters values and skills that are critically needed by today's society. Grimm, Luisa, and Fhausen [2014] noted that developing entrepreneurial values and skills in the business venture creation process prepares students for the realities of life when they graduate.

Based on several significances, Chiru, Tachiciu, and Ciuchete [2012] recommended that schools should consider educating young people and train them in entrepreneurship and encourage them to pursue an entrepreneurial career to increase economic efficiency, bring innovation to the market, create new job opportunities and sustain employment levels. Kanyani and Namusonge [2013] also point out that entrepreneurship education helps the youth develop the mindset and acquire the know-how necessary to make self-employment a viable career option. Further, the

UNFPA (2012) report on challenges and opportunities facing the youth in sub-Saharan Africa

hinted that today, the world has become private-sector driven. Economic prosperity in the 21st century requires entrepreneurial skills to function in the labour market, especially in the TVET sector. Due to such calls, many countries revised education curricula and introduced entrepreneurship education as a core subject, especially in the formal education system.

The government of Malawi followed suit and rolled out a TVET curriculum, which introduced entrepreneurship education as a core subject in both formal and informal technical and vocational education systems. The revised TEVET curriculum was officially rolled out in 2006 nationwide in all TVET training institutions. As highlighted in the TEVET entrepreneurship training manual, entrepreneurship education aims to achieve the following objectives: develop skills, knowledge and values required for entrepreneurship for various codes and regulations; practice safety in potentially harmful situations and develop an appreciation for conservation and environmental issues (Ministry of Education Science and Technology, 2006).

However, some sources report that despite providing entrepreneurship training, TEVET scholars in Malawi do not go for entrepreneurship once they graduate from an institution (Jimart et al., 2009; Malawi TEVET Policy, 1998; MGDS II, 2008). Further, the Jimart Development consultant's report of 2009 also highlighted that in Malawi, the level of entrepreneurial activity needs to be higher among TVET graduates. The same Malawi Labour Survey of 2009 found that many TEVET graduates with formal training continue to seek employment in the formal sector (Jimart et al., 2009).

Studies done by Arzeni (2014) (Banadaki et al., 2013) found that college students, including TVET graduates in many countries, do not go for entrepreneurship due to several factors. One such factor is the need for more self-efficacy to introduce and run a business. Setiawan (2014) argue that students can only go into entrepreneurship if they have high self-efficacy to drive them to become dedicated entrepreneurs. Without such minimal levels of entrepreneurial self-efficacy, it is unlikely that potential entrepreneurs would be sufficiently motivated to engage in the new venture creation process.

Self-efficacy is a person's belief in his/her ability to perform specific tasks (Panc et al., 2012). Therefore, self-efficacy is one of the most essential aspects to influence critical entrepreneurial success during the early stages of the start-up of a business venture. As Brancu, Munteanu, and Gligor (2012) argue, an entrepreneur must possess

entrepreneurial skills and knowledge and build a strong sense of self-efficacy to anticipate challenges in the new business creation process.

One core purpose of entrepreneurship education is to raise learners' efficacy. The need to assess the effectiveness of entrepreneurship education in the TVET sector motivated the study to assess how final-year students would perceive their efficacy at Nasawa Technical College in Malawi.

The study was conducted to assess levels of entrepreneurial self-efficacy among final-year students. The study's rationale was based on the fact that entrepreneurship education needs to focus on developing self-efficacy in students to influence them to become entrepreneurs upon graduating from college (Tiago et al., 2015). One of the objectives of the study The paper intends to establish if there is a statistically significant difference in students' perceived entrepreneurial self-efficacy concerning their programme of study. Secondly, the study sought to determine if there is a statistically significant difference between students exposed to entrepreneurship education and students not exposed to entrepreneurship education in their perceived entrepreneurial self-efficacy. Finally, the study aimed to establish if there is a significant difference among male and female students on their perceived entrepreneurial self-efficacy. Entrepreneurship education and training facilitate the creation of start-ups by changing students' mindsets and developing their entrepreneurial orientation measured through entrepreneurial intentions.

Entrepreneurial self-efficacy

Entrepreneurial self-efficacy (ESE) is a construct that involves the individual's beliefs about their capabilities for attaining success and controlling cognitions to manage challenging goals during the business start-up phase (Bager, 2013).

ESE has been shown to be closely tied to and a strong predictor of intentionality. Entrepreneurial Self-Efficacy predicts and studies entrepreneurs' behaviour choice, persistence, and effectiveness. Izquierdo and Beulens (2008) observe that high ESE is often best demonstrated under characteristic entrepreneurship conditions, including risk and uncertainty. Predictions as to who might be suited to becoming an entrepreneur use measures of ESE. On the other hand, Maritz (2013) emphasised that entrepreneurship self-efficacy is a key antecedent to entrepreneurial choice.

ESE is an appropriate measure for entrepreneurship because it is task-specific and includes the individual's assessment of their own confident beliefs about their internal (personality) and external (environmental) constraints and possibilities and is close to action and action intentionality (Pihie & Bagheri, 2011).

Many significant entrepreneurship studies show that high ESE is an asset for aspiring entrepreneurs. High ESE is suggested to result in an entrepreneur who will exert more effort, persist through setbacks, and develop better plans and strategies for the task (Colakogh et al., 2012). In contrast, those with low ESE are more likely to avoid challenges and see situations as potential risks rather than opportunities (Luca et al., 2012).

Entrepreneurship education in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET)

Technical and vocational education is recognised as an engine of scientific and technological invention and is important in transforming invention and technological development through innovation (Colakogh et al., 2012). Therefore, Technical and vocational institutions are key in harnessing students' talents. Arzeni (2014) asserted that TVET can be conceptualised as a societal innovation system and that when entrepreneurship education is embedded in such a system, it can be regarded not only as a task of producing entrepreneurially oriented competent students but also reproducing the social mechanisms that underpin and facilitate the birth and growth of businesses. In addition, technical and vocational education and training play a key role as entrepreneurial hubs, connecting researchers, students, entrepreneurs, business enterprises and other stakeholders (Byabashija et al., 2010).

Gender and entrepreneurial self-efficacy

Gender is a personal trait or attribute conditioned by a traditional social system in which men are expected to think and behave as men (masculine), and women are expected to think and behave as women (feminine) (Mueller & Datoon, 2008). Within such a social system, some behaviours, roles, and careers are stereotyped as masculine while others are stereotyped as feminine. According to Sarwako and Nurdiana (2013), instrumental behaviours and attitudes that are stereotyped as masculine include assertiveness, competitiveness, independence and aggressiveness, while expressive behaviours and attitudes that are stereotyped as feminine include submissiveness, dependence, deference, cooperation, caring and nurturing.

Women, in general, express less positive perceptions about themselves and the environment. The reasons for resistance to starting up a business are presumed to stem from a higher fear of failure Barakat and McLellan (2010) or a lower perception of self-efficacy for careers, especially in professions where women are underrepresented (Krecar & Coric, 2013). Therefore, entrepreneurial intentions among women appear to be lower than among men.

A study by Kurcuzevska and Bialek [2014] found that male students had a higher attitude towards entrepreneurship than female students. They attributed the results to the fact that female students prefer routine jobs after graduation and do not like risks. On the other hand, McStay [2008] noted that males conversely prefer a life of success, and the notion of entrepreneurship is an opportunity to be successful rather than working for others. In addition, Sweida and Reichard [2013] argued that male children have more support from parents or family, such that males have a higher sense of confidence and mental maturity than female children regarding entrepreneurial self-efficacy and intentions. Students, in general, still depend on parents who are considered to contribute to their future. At the same time, Kurcuzevska and Bialek [2014] indicated that the higher the social support, the higher the entrepreneurial intention among students.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a quantitative descriptive survey design. According to Church and Rodgers [2010], a descriptive study is designed to present persons, events or situations accurately. The descriptive research design was initiated to explore entrepreneurial self-efficacy among final-year students at Nasawa Technical College. The population of the study was all final-year students at Nasawa Technical College studying various technical and vocational occupations. The population included students exposed to entrepreneurship education and those not exposed to it throughout their study period.

The population of final-year students at Nasawa Technical College was 200. A stratified random sampling technique was deployed to identify the sample. Students were grouped according to programme of study, mode of admission, year of study, and gender.

The study sampled 132 students. Each variable group had a total of 66 samples. Two sample variables comprised final-year normal entry students and final-year parallel entry students. For each of these sample sets, 66 questionnaires were administered. This represented 66% of the entire population.

Data was collected using a questionnaire which had 31 items. The reliability test of the instrument achieved a scale of 0.98 on Cronbach alpha. A total of 119 final-year students at Nasawa Technical College participated in the study, which was sampled from six courses: namely, bricklaying, carpentry and joinery, motor vehicle mechanics, motorcycle mechanics, general fitting and secretarial studies. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20 software package was used to analyse the data. Nonparametric tests such as Mann Whitney U and Kruskal-Wallis H

tests were applied to infer the results. The data were analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistics.

RESULTS

Mann-Whitney U test was used to determine if students differed statistically significantly among themselves in perceived entrepreneurial self-efficacy based on the mode of entry and type of curriculum followed. The results revealed that these factors significantly affected the entrepreneurial self-efficacy of the respondents. According to the results, TEVETA-sponsored students differed statistically significantly [5% level of significance] from parallel entry students on all entrepreneurial self-efficacy determining factors.

Table 1 Student ranks

Ranks			
Mode of entry	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
TEVET	61	74.03	4516.00
Parallel entry	58	45.24	2624.00
Total	119		

As Table 1 illustrates, students exposed to entrepreneurship education (TEVETA Sponsored) scored higher mean rank values than students not exposed to entrepreneurship education (Parallel entry).

Table 2: Mann Whitney U test- *P Value*

Test Statistics	Mann-Whitney U	Wilcoxon W	Z	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	Monte Carlo Sig. (2-tailed)			Monte Carlo Sig. (1-tailed)		
					Sig.	95% Confidence Interval		Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound		Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Mode of Entry	913.000	2624.000	-4.855	.000	.000 ^b	.000	.025	.000 ^b	.000	.025

According to table 2, the Mann Whitney U test was $P = 0.000 < 0.05$ level of significance, hence rejecting the null hypothesis.

Although this study did not conduct pre and post-tests to see the effectiveness of the entrepreneurship program among TEVETA-sponsored students, these results were likely influenced by the provision of entrepreneurship education. TEVETA-sponsored

students in this study had been exposed to entrepreneurship education from their first to third year.

The results support earlier research findings that entrepreneurship education significantly influences perceived entrepreneurial self-efficacy among individuals (Barakat & McLellan, 2010; Byabashija et al., 2010). Therefore, all students exposed to entrepreneurship education perceive their efficacy as higher.

Therefore, the findings support the literature that argues that entrepreneurship education enhances perceptions of entrepreneurial self-efficacy, as evidenced by studies conducted by Bager (2013) and Bose and Utuoma (2008). On the other hand, Hashemi, Hossein, and Rezvantar's (2012) study findings are also similar to those of Kadir, Salim, and Kamarudin (2012), indicating the importance of entrepreneurship education as necessary to develop an entrepreneurial mindset and capability among students.

This study did not test cause-and-effect relationships. Instead, it sought to establish if there is a correlation between entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurial self-efficacy by studying ESE levels among students. Using students with different levels of exposure to entrepreneurship education strengthened the view that entrepreneurship education positively impacts entrepreneurial self-efficacy. As noted in the study, TEVETA-sponsored students with three years' exposure to entrepreneurship education differed significantly in perceived entrepreneurial self-efficacy at a 5% significance level from those without such exposure. In order to balance equity in the provision of TVET, all students studying in TVET institutions should be exposed to entrepreneurship education to raise their efficacy while in college.

Currently, TVET system in Malawi is depriving some students of the opportunity to venture into entrepreneurial activities upon graduating from college. This observation is made because parallel entry students are side-lined from entrepreneurship education while in college. This greatly affects their efficacy in starting and running a business.

CONCLUSION

Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) is conceived as a societal innovation system such that entrepreneurship education can be regarded not only as a task of producing entrepreneurially oriented competent students but also as reproducing the social mechanisms that underpin and facilitate the birth and growth of businesses (Kasim et al., 2014).

Study findings have shown that students exposed to entrepreneurship education have high entrepreneurial self-efficacy then those not exposed to entrepreneurship education, the differences were statistically significant on the Mann-Whitney U test, which recorded a $P = 0.000 < 0.05$, hence rejecting the null hypothesis. According to the results, the difference is because TEVETA-sponsored students follow the revised curriculum and are exposed to entrepreneurship education, unlike Parallel entry students who follow the old curriculum.

Therefore, based on the findings, Entrepreneurship education in technical colleges should be taught to all students regardless of mode of entry into college or type of curriculum. This is in view of literature which supports that the provision of entrepreneurship education positively impacts students' entrepreneurial self-efficacy and the development of entrepreneurial characteristics. Making entrepreneurship education accessible to all students can increase the number of potential entrepreneurs who can identify and exploit opportunities in the Malawi TVET sector. According to the literature, the unemployment rate among the youth is extremely high in Malawi; therefore, it is necessary to expose the youth to entrepreneurial skills to become self-reliant after undergoing TEVET training.

Finally, the paper recommends that a study be conducted to investigate how many students start their businesses after being exposed to entrepreneurship education. Such a study can establish the rate of involvement in entrepreneurship activities when students graduate from a training institution.

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