

EVALUATION OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION CURRICULUM AND UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS' ACQUISITION OF ENTREPRENEURIAL SKILLS FOR LIFELONG LEARNING

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Abstract

This study evaluated 'Evaluation of Early Childhood Education Curriculum and Undergraduate Students' Acquisition of Entrepreneurial Skills for Lifelong Learning. The study adopted a correlational survey research design. 1342 undergraduate students of early childhood education in tertiary institutions in Lagos State University (LASU) and Lagos State University of Education (LASUED) constitute the population of the study, through which 134 students were sampled for the study which is 10% of the total population. The instrument use for data collection was a self-developed four point scale questionnaire titled "Evaluation of Early Childhood Education Curriculum and Undergraduate Students' Acquisition of Entrepreneurial Skills for Lifelong Learning Questionnaires" (EECECUSAESLLQ) developed by the researcher and validated by research experts with the reliability coefficient of 0.84. Data from the research questions were tested using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) at 0.05 level of significance. The findings of the study among others revealed that adequate provision of materials/facilities improves the development of entrepreneurship skill acquisition among undergraduate students of early childhood education in tertiary institutions. It was concluded that adequate provision of materials/facilities improves the development of entrepreneurship skills acquisition among undergraduate students in tertiary institutions. It was recommended to mandate the inclusion of entrepreneurial skill development into the curriculum of early childhood education across all levels and skill acquisition areas for students' development should be funded or adequately supplied by the government.

Keywords: Evaluation, Early Childhood Education, Curriculum, Entrepreneurship Skill, Acquisition, Undergraduate Students, Tertiary Institution

Introduction

It is important to note that almost half of Nigeria population is made up of youths. Many youths are entering the labour market every year. Government at various levels has carried out series of programmes to address youth unemployment so that graduates of tertiary institutions will be self-employed after graduation. To this end, the government through the Federal Ministry of Education makes entrepreneurship education one of the compulsory general study courses for undergraduates across the country. This is a

positive step in the right direction that helps to inculcate in the youths the spirit of entrepreneurship. This development will not only address the problem of unemployment and under-employment but will also ensure adequate entrepreneurial human capacity for national development.

The essence of entrepreneurship education is to build in the undergraduate students of early childhood education, entrepreneurship spirit and culture through the courses taught in the early childhood department. The Federal Government of Nigeria (2014) in the National Policy on Education made it clear on the need for functional, relevant, practical and acquisition of appropriate skills and development of competence as equipment for individuals to live in and contribute to the development of the society. To create an understanding of basic business issues, creative work attitude and an entrepreneurial skills among undergraduate students of early childhood education in tertiary institutions in Lagos State. Dike and Effanga (2020), opined that entrepreneurship is a process of change where innovation is the most vital function of the entrepreneur which is very essential to assist the undergraduates in their quest to start their own business instead of waiting for a white collar job from the government as we all know that all the graduates of ECE will not end up in classroom.

In view of the above, entrepreneurship was introduced into the curriculum of tertiary institutions to prepare its recipients for relevancy on graduation. This is not different from the universities in Lagos State as department of early childhood education has some courses that could develop undergraduate students entrepreneurial skills. These courses include: Puppetry in early childhood education and Children's Literature.

Many studies have been conducted with corporate concepts and approaches to defining entrepreneurship. According to Aliyu, Dang & Makson (2021) entrepreneurship is the ability of some people to take risks and combine factors of production in order to produce goods and services. Entrepreneurship facilitates prosperity of individuals, states, regions and nations. Entrepreneurship has established non-negotiable impact on the socio-economic development of the society. Economically, entrepreneurship invigorates resources and promotes jobs creation through the formation of new businesses. Thus, transforming competencies into skills is the root of entrepreneurship which invariably raises productivity and increases wealth of nations as entrepreneurship concerns itself with skill acquisition.

Samlarts and Zerbinati (2016) opined that entrepreneurship education raises some attitudes and behaviours in the overall economic activities of individuals who have interest in the infrastructural development, wealth and job creation in their nation. The objective of early childhood education entrepreneurship centre in tertiary institution is for the undergraduate students of early childhood education to acquire both theoretical knowledge and practical skills for self-employment after graduation.

Oluka and Onyebuanyi (2017), indicate that the place of skill acquisition cannot be over emphasized in the rapid development of education, technology and other sectors of the economy. Skill may be seen as an excellent product of training combined with relevant ideas in carrying out specific tasks. Onoh and Onyebuanyi (2017), see skill as the ability to do something well, usually gained through training or experience. Entrepreneurial skills are best appreciated when acquired through formal education as it matches theoretical knowledge with practical skills.

Nevertheless, it is discouraging that entrepreneurship irrespective of its place in preparing undergraduate students of early childhood education for life long career, active and contributing members of the society has appeared to be non-functional in meeting with the stated objectives. This is evident as most graduates of entrepreneurship education display poor skill acquisition in their places of assignment or duties. This may be as a result of lack of capacity development programmes for teachers, availability of inadequate materials and facilities, lack of well equipped resource centres in early childhood education department, poor supervision of students during practical classes among others. Therefore, the study sought to evaluate early childhood education curriculum and undergraduate students' acquisition of entrepreneurial skills in tertiary institutions in Lagos State.

Undergraduate students can study a wide range of subjects, including early childhood education, liberal arts, sciences, business, engineering, and more. During their undergraduate studies, students take a variety of courses in their chosen field of study as well as general education requirements. They may also have the opportunity to participate in internship, research projects, study abroad programmes, and other extracurricular activities. However, upon completion, of their undergraduate degree, students may choose to enter the workforce or continue their education by pursuing a graduate degree or decide to establish their own small or medium scale business.

Early childhood education is the earliest level of education from birth to age five. It is the foundation upon which every other level of education is built on. It is also informal kind of education that takes place in a formal setting. Early childhood education first and foremost deals with part of the children's development in terms of character, physical, cognitive, linguistic, artistic, social, emotional, spiritual, self-discipline, self concept and self-reliance. The Federal Government of Nigeria (2014), sees early childhood education as the care, security, stimulation, protection both physically and spiritually given to children age 0 to 5 years in crèche, nursery and a year in kindergarten before entering primary level of education. Education at all levels has been seen as an instrument for total transformation. This transformation may take place in an individual's mind first and noticed when the individual's level of reasoning has been improved and relevant to the society. Thus, education is an effective instrument of positive change in the society and a fundamental social institution for transmitting basic knowledge including values, norms, skills and culture to the young ones in the society (Sassenberg & Michael 2019).

Atsumbe (2012) perceive education as the vital instrument for social and economic mobility at the personal level and an instrument for the transformation of the society at the national level. Amaele, Wosu and Ejire (2011) see education as a total development of the individual child through acceptable methods and techniques according to his ability and interest to meet up the needs of the society and for individuals to take their rightful place and contribute equally to the enhancement of the society. Ololube and Egbezor (2021) state that education is the process by which children, youths and adults learn abilities, attitudes and other forms of behaviour which are positive values to the society in which they live. Education is therefore, a valuable investment towards the production of human capital resources in a nation. Education generally is acquired at different levels including early childhood but not limited to tertiary institution.

Federal Republic of Nigeria (2014), described tertiary education as the education given after secondary schooling years in colleges of education, polytechnics, monotechnics and

universities, including those institutions offering correspondence courses, which provide the students the opportunity and potentials to contribute optimally to national development by:

- I. intensifying and diversifying its programme for the development of high level manpower within the context of the needs of nation;
- II. making all professional course contents to reflect on national requirement;
- III. making all practicals courses compulsory for all students;
- IV. some courses should be made compulsory for all students to offer as general study courses such as information technology (IT) and entrepreneurship skills
- V. making entrepreneurship skills acquisition a requirement for all Nigerian universities.

Entrepreneurship skills can enhance students' adaptability and flexibility in their careers. Whether they choose to start their own early childhood centres or work as a caregiver in an established early childhood school, the skills acquired through entrepreneurship can be valuable in their career prospects. Entrepreneurship skill acquisition course is often housed in general studies programmes in many institutions and taught by those who do not possess basic training in entrepreneurship education and therefore lack the skills to impart the required knowledge effectively. Only the trained teaching personnel that can understand and impart entrepreneurial subject matter in an inspiring manner that can develop entrepreneurial minded students who will meet the nation's economic goals

Oluka & Onyebuanyi (2017), stated that entrepreneurship skills acquisition offers numerous benefits to undergraduate students of Early Childhood Education (ECE) which will help to develop their mindset that fosters innovation and creativity. This can be particularly valuable in the field of early childhood education, where new technologies and solutions are constantly being developed. Entrepreneurship often involves identifying and solving complex problems. In acquiring entrepreneurship skills, undergraduate students of early childhood education can enhance their ability to analyze challenges and come up with effective solutions, which can open up opportunities for collaborations and future career prospects.

Statement of the Problem

In Nigeria, the rising unemployment has helped to increase the need for entrepreneurial skills acquisition starting from the undergraduate student of early childhood education. The development of a nation's economy depends mostly on the quality of skilled undergraduate students in tertiary institutions who will be trained and are ready to establish and continue with such skills later in future. The acquisition of entrepreneurial skills by undergraduate students involves acquiring competencies beyond traditional learning methods. These skills enable students to become more resourceful, innovative, creative and self-employed, which can have long-term benefits for their growth and development.

The problem of this study underscores the need for the evaluation of Early Childhood Education Curriculum and acquisition of entrepreneurship education in tertiary institutions in Lagos State to have in-depth knowledge of courses taught that could

development entrepreneurial skills acquisition in early childhood education. How these opportunities will make the individual students to be a productive entrepreneur, creative, innovative, enlarge the economy and increase personal freedom is an issue of concern. Hence, this study will examine the early childhood education and acquisition of entrepreneurial opportunities by undergraduate ECPE students in public tertiary institutions in Lagos State.

Objectives of the Study

The following objectives are as listed below:

- I. evaluate the extent puppetry in early childhood education curriculum aids undergraduate students' acquisition of entrepreneurial skills in tertiary institutions in Lagos State.
- II. evaluate the extent children's literature in early childhood education curriculum enhance undergraduate students' acquisition of entrepreneurial skills in tertiary institutions in Lagos State.

Research Questions

The study is guided by the following research questions:

- I. To what extent does puppetry in early childhood education curriculum aids undergraduate students' acquisition of entrepreneurial skills in tertiary institutions in Lagos State?
- II. To what extent does children's literature in early childhood education curriculum enhance undergraduate students' acquisition of entrepreneurial skills in tertiary institutions in Lagos State?

Methodology

A descriptive survey research design was used for the study. The population of the study comprised 1342 undergraduate students of early childhood education in tertiary institutions in Lagos State University (LASU) and Lagos State University of Education (LASUED). 134 students were sampled for the study which is 10% of total population. Simple random sampling technique was used to select 67 students from each of the departments. A self-structured instrument was used title "Evaluation of Early Childhood Education Curriculum and Undergraduate Students Entrepreneurship Skills Acquisition in Tertiary Student Questionnaires" (EECECUSESQA). Cronbach alpha was used to check the reliability of the instrument and the consistency level at $r = 0.84$. Descriptive statistics of frequency count, mean, standard deviation and criterion mean was used to analyse the research questions and inferential statistics of Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) and t-test were used to test the formulated hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Demographic of the respondents

Variables	Frequency		
			Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	58	43.3
	Female	76	56.7
	Total	134	100
Age	15 – 20	34	25.4
	20 – 25	48	35.8
	25 – 30	33	24.6
	35 - 40	19	14.2
	Total	134	100
Year of Study	2021/2022	42	31.3
	2022/2023	45	33.6
	2023/2024	47	35.1
	Total	134	100

Table 1 shows the demographic information of the respondents as follows: Gender distribution; Female undergraduate students are the majority which accounted for 56.7% and male undergraduate students accounted for 43.3%. Age distribution reveal that undergraduate students between the age of 20 – 25 years are the majority which accounted for 35.8%, follows by 15 – 20 years which accounted for 25.4%, 25 – 30 years accounted for 24.6%, 35 – 40 accounted for 14.2%. Years of study reveals that 2023/2024 academic session are the majority 35.1%, follow by 2022/2023 accounted for 33.6% and 2021/2022 accounted for 31.3%.

Answers to research questions

Research question 1: To what extent does puppetry in early childhood education curriculum aids undergraduate students’ acquisition of entrepreneurial skills in tertiary institutions in Lagos State?

Table 2: shows that puppetry in early childhood education curriculum aids undergraduate students' acquisition of entrepreneurial skills in tertiary institutions in Lagos State

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	St.D
1.	There are adequate puppetry materials in your department for students to make use of during practical lesson.	43 (32.1)	50 (37.3)	30 (22.4)	11 (8.2)	2.93	0.93
2.	Puppetry materials enhance entrepreneurship skill acquisition among undergraduate students of early childhood education.	20 (14.9)	77 (57.5)	30 (22.4)	7 (5.2)	2.82	0.74
3.	Puppetry in early childhood education is a course taught and it is compulsory for all students.	33 (24.6)	68 (60.7)	23 (17.2)	10 (7.5)	2.92	0.84
4.	My school offer puppetry course and a well equipped resource room for practicals.	31 (23.1)	80 (59.7)	15 (11.2)	8 (6.0)	3.00	0.76
5.	Students participate actively in puppet practical during practical lesson in your school.	24 (17.9)	11 (8.2)	30 (22.4)	69 (51.5)	1.92	1.14
Grand mean =		2.71					

Table 2 shows that puppetry in early childhood education curriculum aids undergraduate students' acquisition of entrepreneurial skills in tertiary institutions in Lagos State. The detailed analysis revealed that my school offer puppetry course and a well equipped resource room for practicals = 3.00), there are adequate puppetry materials in your department for students to make use of during practical lessons (mean = 2.93), puppetry in early childhood education is a course taught and it is compulsory for all students (mean = 2.92), puppetry materials enhance entrepreneurship skill acquisition among undergraduate students of early childhood education (mean = 2.82) and Students participate actively in puppet practical during practical lesson in your school (mean = 1.92).

Research question 2: To what extent does children's literature in early childhood education curriculum enhance undergraduate students' acquisition of entrepreneurial skills in tertiary institutions in Lagos State?

Table 3: showing that children’s literature in early childhood education curriculum enhance undergraduate students’ acquisition of entrepreneurial skills in tertiary institutions in Lagos

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	St.D
1.	The resource room is conducive for students to participate in practical lesson.	31 (23.1)	80 (59.7)	15 (11.2)	8 (6.0)	3.00	0.76
2.	Children’s literature/Music and Dance is offered in my school	24 (17.9)	11 (8.2)	30 (22.4)	69 (55.1)	1.92	1.14
3.	It exposes students to different areas of entrepreneurship skills needed.	23 (17.2)	61 (45.5)	26 (34.3)	4 (3.0)	2.76	0.76
4.	Children’s literature/Music and Dance equip students’ practical learning culture which help them later in life.	35 (26.1)	73 (54.5)	25 (18.7)	1 (0.7)	3.05	0.69
5.	Children’s literature/Music and Dance build strength and self-reliance in undergraduate students of early childhood education	41 (30.6)	70 (52.2)	16 (11.2)	8 (6.0)	3.07	0.80
Grand mean =		2.76					

Table 3 shows that children’s literature/music and dance in early childhood education curriculum enhances undergraduate students’ acquisition of entrepreneurial skills in tertiary institutions in Lagos State. The detailed analysis revealed that children’s literature/music and dance build strength and self-reliance in undergraduate students of early childhood education (mean = 3.07), children’s literature equip the students’ practical learning culture which help them later in life (mean = 3.05), the resource room is conducive for students to participate in practical lesson (mean = 3.00), it exposes students to different areas of entrepreneurship skills needed (mean = 2.76) and Children’s literature/music and dance is offered in my school (mean = 1.92).

Discussion

The findings made in the analysis of research question one shows that adequate provision of materials improve the development of entrepreneurship skills among undergraduate students of early childhood education in tertiary institutions in Lagos State. This is true because adequate provision of materials will ensure effective practical exercise during teaching and learning activities as this will help the undergraduate students to have adequate materials to learn as a result develop in them the capacity that will help the society at large. It is however, necessary to make available materials that will equip and prepare the undergraduate students of early childhood education to be self-employed. This is in concordance with the findings of Dike and Effanga (2020) who stated that schools should explore, practice, attend an event and have visible learning resources where students will develop their capacity in the learning activities which all the undergraduate students of early childhood education may participate to acquire knowledge and skills required to become an entrepreneur. Hypothesis 1, the t-test result in table 5 shows that there is a difference between male and female undergraduate students acquisition of entrepreneur skills ($t = -13.77$; $df = 132$; $P < 0.05$). This then means that female undergraduate students have higher mean score in their acquisition of entrepreneur

skills (30.60) than male undergraduate students (10.06). Therefore, the null hypothesis 1 is rejected. This implies that the status of the respondents have no significant difference in the mean ratings regarding how adequate provision of materials improves the development of entrepreneurship skill acquisition among undergraduate students of early childhood education in tertiary institutions in Lagos State.

Research question 2 revealed that appropriate supervision of students during practical lesson can improve entrepreneurship skill acquisition among undergraduate students of early childhood education in tertiary institutions in Lagos State. This is absolutely true as appropriate supervision ensure that students are checked into the resource room for practical activities, materials distributed to them with guide on the use of the materials and identification of problem areas to ensure effective time management and general safety of the students and to ensure that all the students participate in the practical activities. This finding is in line with Hoque, et al (2020) who opined that supervision of instruction potentially improves classroom practices and contributes to students' success through the professional growth and improvement of teachers. It simply shows that there is a significant positive relationship between undergraduate students' level of study and their acquisition of entrepreneurial skills in early childhood education. ($r=.995$; $p<0.05$). This implies that undergraduate student's level of study has a correlates with students acquisition of entrepreneurship

Conclusion

In conclusion, undergraduate students who get comprehensive entrepreneurial education in tertiary institution have a heightened potential for attaining future success. If students are equipped with entrepreneurial abilities throughout the period of schooling years, there is a greater probability that they will embark on their own entrepreneurial endeavours later in future. This exposure to entrepreneurship is likely to influence their career choices, leading them towards entrepreneurial paths which will help to develop the society at large.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made to bring about an improvement in the development of entrepreneurship skill acquisition in tertiary institutions in Lagos State.

- I. It is recommended that entrepreneurial skill development should be included in the curriculum of early childhood education, spanning across all educational levels.
- II. The skill acquisition areas for students should be funded or adequately supplied by the government with state-of-the-art resources to facilitate skill development and future proficiency in undergraduate students of early childhood education.
- III. It is recommended that the curriculum of early childhood education should include that all universities offering ECE should have an established entrepreneurship skill acquisition centres.

- IV. It is recommended that students should be certificated on the areas of entrepreneurial skill acquisition apart from the general certificate that will be awarded as a graduate at the end.

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