

Students' Edupreneurial Knowledge Awareness and Skills Development in Early Childhood Education

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ABSTRACT

Edupreneurial education is a way of preparing individuals to be responsible, self-reliant and enterprising in becoming job creators. Tertiary institutions in Nigeria have embraced edupreneurial skills in the curriculum which prepare students to be self-employed after graduation, early childhood education is not left out. Ever since the introduction of ECE in tertiary institutions, the enrolment of students was high, but recently, enrolment decreased over time. Recently, ECE curriculum was later designed to embracing edupreneurial skills, yet, the decline in enrolment has not increased the reasons yet to be ascertained. The study therefore examines students' edupreneurial knowledge awareness and skills development in early childhood education. The study adopted descriptive survey design. The population for the study comprised of the students in the faculty of Education of the Adeyemi Federal University of Education, Ondo. Purposive random technique was used to select a faculty, which is the faculty of Education and a Department of ECCE. This is because the study is about students studying early childhood education as a major course. Random sampling method was used to select thirty students from the Department. A self- designed three-sectioned questionnaire named Early Childhood Edupreneurial Awareness and Skills Development Questionnaire (ECEASDQ). The instrument showed a high reliability coefficient results of 0.83, 0.75 and 0.77 respectively using cronbach Alpha. The questionnaires were administered and data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics of frequency counts, percentage, and mean. This study concluded that the level of pre-service teachers on the awareness of edupreneurial skills in ECE is high, that pre-service teachers were able to identify edupreneurial skills they were exposed to in the course of their exposure to early childhood education and they made choices of different edupreneurial skills they would like to venture in after graduation in other to be self-employed. The study therefore recommended that government should provide funds in terms of loan that could allow graduates of ECE to establish themselves and that current ECE practitioners and entrepreneurs should sensitize the public of their success in the field of Early childhood education.

Keywords: Awareness, Edupreneurial, Early Childhood Education, Knowledge, Skills

INTRODUCTION

It is no more news that the world is moving away from white collar jobs. The new norm now is job creation which could be the ability to apply knowledge acquired into creative skills. This was borne as result of increase in the level of unemployment in the world especially in Nigeria. Many graduates of Universities, Polytechnics and Colleges of education are out of jobs as there are very few white-collar jobs that are accessible to very few considering the population explosion and under development ravaging this country. In other to solving this menace that has eaten deep into our country, there was this need to diversify and think outside the box and everyone just have to create his or her jobs and be self-employed. Hence, comes what is known to be entrepreneurial skills and called edupreneurial skills in all the tertiary institutions in Nigeria and education is not left out.

Nwangwu (2006) defined edupreneurial/entrepreneurship education as the type of education that equips the learner with the knowledge and skills to desire, seek, recognize and utilize available opportunity to do something new to create wealth for self and others and consequently contribute effectively to the society. (Owoseni, 2009 in Idoko & Agyenyi 2022) noted that entrepreneurial/edupreneurial education is a specialized training for students

of vocational and technical education to acquire desired skills, ideas and managerial abilities and capacities for self-employment rather than being employed for payment. It is known as a specialized knowledge that inculcates in learners the traits of risk-taking, innovation, arbitrage and co-ordination of factors of production for the purpose of creating new products or services for new and existing users within human communities. Entrepreneurship education increases entrepreneurial self-efficacy, self-employment, and risk-taking attitude of the entrepreneur (Igbo 2004 in Idoko & Agyenyi 2022). It prepares people to be responsible, enterprising individuals who contribute to the economic development and sustainable society. The essential ingredients here include the willingness to take calculated risks in terms of time, equity, or career, the ability to formulate an effective venture team; the creative skill to mark out needed resources; and fundamental skill of building solid business plan; and finally, the vision to recognize opportunity where others see chaos, contradiction, and confusion, this venture is worth pursuing from the early stage so that the goal of entrepreneurship education will be brought to fruition (Karen, 2009). According to (Egboh 2009) perceived edupreneurial or entrepreneur as risk takers, an innovator who in spite of any odd use focus, devotion and commitment to achieve his goal. (Eze & Obidile 2018) stated that by all indications, entrepreneurship education was incorporated into the tertiary education curriculum to empower students to be job creators and not job seekers.

Researches showed that recently, education courses in addition to the establishment of entrepreneurial education in all Nigerian tertiary institutions have designed the curriculum in such a way that it embraces various entrepreneurial skills that could make graduates to be self sustained in the future, it is means of transforming education through the development of creativity and innovative ideas, translating it into life skills that could make graduates to be employment of labour, self-reliant, productive and advance the course of economy of our nation, Nigeria. The methods of teaching prescribed also works towards enhancing creativity, innovation, construction of own knowledge through applications of knowledge, and early childhood education is not left out. Entrepreneurship education with skills and competencies acquired can help Nigeria maintain its material civilization by enabling the individual to keep pace with the rapidly changing business, industrial and technological growth and development. Okechukwu (2025) concluded that reiterating its critical importance, entrepreneurship education is indispensable for cultivating an innovative mindset, empowering graduates for self-employment, and driving Nigeria's economic diversification and job creation. In other words, the future of edupreneurship education must be seen as an instrument for transforming Nigeria's resources into finished goods and services that will promote higher standard of living (Olateju, (2013); Okolie, 2010). Early childhood education is also included among the courses that are highly skilled.

Early childhood education (ECE) is the education given to children prior the primary education (Ojo, 2016). This course is named early childhood (care) and education is offered by students in the faculty of education (University) and in colleges of education. Researches showed that parents wanted their wards to be enrolled on the course. ECE as reported by Boyd (2013) of a study conducted in 2002 by National Institute of Child Health & Human Development (NICHD) and The Early Child Care Research Network (ECCRN) found that providers with Bachelor's degrees and National Certificate in Education (NCE) in Early childhood education provided higher quality learning experiences for children in their care. This underscores the importance of giving children the opportunity to learn under professionally qualified caregivers/teachers. Musa, Ismail & Nasiru (2017) posited that there was a high demand for early childhood education by parents, the reason for newly established early childhood institutions to grow and develop students in the area. That aftermath resulted into many students wanting to study early childhood education as a course in most of higher learning institutions in Nigeria, hence the high enrolment in the area of study for some time before a decline.

What happened shortly? It is obvious that the reasons why early childhood education faced a decline in enrolment especially in the area of this study was as a result of many graduates perceived to be unemployable by governmental bodies employing teachers as well as the curriculum which could not expose students to many edupreneurial skills and or that it was not subject-based, all these limited the graduates of early childhood education. Some of the challenges confronting the success of Early childhood Education in Nigeria which include economic pressure from parents, lack of well-developed curricula, lack of enthusiasm for students, lack of government interest in promoting small businesses (Ariyo; 2005 & Unachukwu, 2007 in Okeke & Edikpa (2014). This was also supported by Obiamaka and Enekwachi (2021). Musa, Ismail & Nasiru (2017) further corroborated it that many ECE graduates were not employed in spite of parents' wishes to get their wards to

studying ECE, hence, the need to review the curriculum especially when the world is tilting towards entrepreneurial skills/education.

According to Guthrie (1952) in Okolie, Ituma, Opara, Ukwa, Inyagu and Ndem (2014) who defined skill as the ability to bring about some end results with maximum certainty through the rhythmic performance of an act acquired through training, it is a well-established habit of doing something and it involves the attainment of performance capability. To acquire or possess a skill is to employ the habit of acting, thinking and behaving until a process becomes natural to the individual through repetition or constant practice. The acquired skills and competencies can manifest in the life of the students to assist them improve on higher standard of life in the community (Odu, 2010). Skill is the ability to do something expertly and well (Uloko, 2010). Recently, the National Certificate in Education (Early childhood Education) curriculum was redesigned deploying the use of a high scope teaching methodology, this allows content to be taught in a practical way, content that are activity based, experimental in nature to develop the art of creativity, leaving the practical aspects of each course to carry the highest grade of 60 marks while comprehension, retention of knowledge and ability to recollect were given 40 marks. This allows students to be exposed to various entrepreneurial skills in early childhood education as a course, thereby making students employers of labour after graduation (2016). Yet, enrolment is seeing not stopped going down the drain, the evidence of this could be seen from the Department enrolment in the study area as documented by (Akinboboye, Akinrotimi, & Ojo 2022) in a study on students' perception of early childhood education as a professional course in Nigerian tertiary education institutions concluded that there was a decline in the enrolment of students admitted for early childhood care and education. The enrolment is still very low now even when there is an introduction of the new curriculum, which is more activity-based and encourage edupreneurial opportunities. The reason which could be that parents were not aware of the course as a professional course and its prospects in making graduates to be self-sufficient, therefore discouraging their wards to pursue it. The number of students enrolment since has experienced a low turn-up the introduction of the new curriculum. This could also be that many parents or intending students were not aware of the self-employed skills embedded in the course, hence this study.

Statement of the Problem

Early Childhood Education over a decade had been embraced by both students and parents. It gained a lot of recognition that students apply for the programme in higher institutions of learning in Nigeria and it was supported by most parents. Research revealed that there was a sharp decline in the number of enrolments especially in the study area for a long time. This has become a concern to experts in the field as students and parents no longer have interest in the course as parents surfaced to change the course for their wards from early childhood education to some other courses. The NCE curriculum was improved few years now showcasing the development of different edupreneurial skills with effective teaching instruction that could enhance the skills development, yet, student's enrolment is still on the decline. This study therefore, examined the level of pre-service students' awareness and identification of edupreneurial skills developed in studying Early childhood education in the study area.

Objectives of the study:

The objectives of the study are to:

1. ascertain the level of awareness of students on edupreneurial opportunities in ECE
 - (i). determine the edupreneurial skills developed as a pre-service teacher in ECE
 - (ii). describe the preferred edupreneurial skills students likes to be engaged in after graduation?

Research Questions:

The following research questions were developed to guide the study:

1. what is the level of awareness of students on edupreneurial opportunities in early childhood education

- (i). what are the edupreneurial skills developed by pre-service students on exposure to early childhood education
- (ii). describe the most preferred edupreneurial skills students would like to engage in after graduation?

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted survey research descriptive design. The population for the study comprised of all the students in the faculty of Education of the Adeyemi Federal University of Education, Ondo. There are five faculties in the University, purposive random technique was used to select a faculty, which is the faculty of Education and a Department of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE). This is because the study centres on students studying early childhood education as a major course. Random sampling method was used to select thirty students from the Department. That is, (ten (10) students from each level. The instrument used for gathering information for the research work is a self- designed three-sectioned questionnaire named Early Childhood Edupreneurial Awareness and Skills Development Questionnaire (ECEASDQ). Section A is for demographic information, section B comprised of item questions with three (3) likert response on the awareness of students on entrepreneurial opportunities in early childhood education. Section C consisted of two item questions on the edupreneurial skills developed by students as a result of exposure to early childhood education programme and to list the ones interested in engaging with after graduation. The instrument showed a high reliability coefficient results of 0.83, 0.75 and 0.77 respectively using cronbach Alpha. The questionnaires were administered and data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics of frequency counts, percentage, and mean.

RESULTS

Research Question 1: What is the level of awareness of students on entrepreneurial opportunities in early childhood education?

Table 1

As a student, I am aware of the following edupreneural opportunities in Early Childhood Education:	A	NA	N	Mean
PrePre-School Teacher who teaches children aged 3-5, planning lessons and activities to promote learning and development	29 (96.0)	0 (0.0)	1(3.3)	2.93
Childcare center Director who oversees daily operations, staff, and programmes in childcare centers or preschools	30(100)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	3.00
Curriculum Developer who creates educational materials and programmes for ECCE settings	25(83.3)	3(10.0)	2(6.6)	2.77
Child Development Specialist: Work with children, families, and teachers to support children's development and learning	26(86.6)	3(10.0)	1(3.3)	2.83
Early Interventionist who provides support and services to young children with special needs or disabilities	29(96.0)	1 (3.3)	0(0.0)	2.97
Parent educator who teaches parents about child development, parenting skills, and supporting their child's learning	30(100)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	3.00
ECCE consultant provides expertise to ECCE programmes, schools, or organizations on best practices and quality improvement				

Researcher conducts studies and research on ECCE topics, informing policy and practice	29(97.0)	1(3.3)	0(0.0)	2.97
Researcher conducts studies and research on ECCE topics, informing policy and practice	28(93.3)	2(6.7)	0(0.0)	2.93
Policy analyst who advocates for ECCE policies and programmes, analyzing data and making recommendations	24(80.0)	2(6.7)	2(6.7)	2.53
Teacher Educator who trains and mentor teachers and educators in ECCE settings	29(97.0)	0(0.0)	1 (3.3)	2.93
Programme evaluator who assesses and evaluate ECCE programmes' quality and effectiveness	26(86.6)	2(6.7)	2(6.7)	2.80
Children's programmes' director who leads programmes for children in museums, libraries, or community organizations	27(90.0)	1(3.3)	2 (6.7)	2.83
Family support worker who provides support and resourcesto families with young children	27(90.0)	1(3.3)	2(6.7)	2.83
Early childhood mental health specialist who supports young children's mental health and well-being	25(83.3)	3(3.3)	2(6.7)	2.77
Special education teacher who works with children with special needs and or in inclusive ECCE settings	30(100.0)	0(0.00)	0 (0.0)	3.00
Edupreneurial or entrepreneurial education is the type of education that markets expertise and skills, using a learning platform that impacts the perceived and actual success of educated individuals	30(100.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	3.00

N= 30

Weighted Average = 2.88

KEY: A=Agree, NA= Not Agree, N=Neutral

Decision Value: Low = 0.00-1.44, High= 1.45-3.00

From table one above, the weighted averaged 2.88 showed that the level of pre-service teachers on the awareness of edupreneurial skills in ECE is high.

Research Question 2: What are the edupreneurial skills developed by pre-service students on exposure to early childhood education?

Pre-teachers were able to identify the following as edupreneurial skills exposed to in the course of their exposure to early childhood education as:

- Development and improvisation of instructional materials by using disposable and new materials in making beautiful colourful flash cards, cot/beds, bead-making and using it and other materials like egg shells, grains, broken bottles, matches etc in producing instructional materials for children.
- Skills in handling children with special needs in the classroom, activities that could promote hand-eye coordination, writing children's literatures, engaging children in extra curricular activities.
- Special skills in becoming a first-aiders, children consultancy and mental health specialist.

- iv. First aid box producer
- (ii). Describe the most preferred edupreneurial skills students would like to engage in after graduation?

Pre-service teachers chose the following skills as their most preferred area to venture in after graduation:

- * Special children therapist
- * Production of baby bears and toys for sales
- * Own a well-equipped centre for special needs children
- * Own personal early childhood education centres
- * Teaching or lecturing jobs
- * Production of instructional charts
- * Children's literature writer
- * Early childhood education consultant
- * Composer of rhymes and songs for children
- * Being an innovative child programmes director.
- * Be a creative mother, a facilitators
- * Special education teacher
- * Producer of creative playing Materials for children

DISCUSSION

From the results, it was revealed that students had a high level of awareness on the various skills that could be acquired as a result of studying early childhood as a course in higher institutions. The awareness could be as a result of the new curriculum introduced in the last few years. This is in support with Boyd (2013) that providers with Bachelor's degrees and National Certificate in Education (NCE) in Early childhood education provided higher quality learning experiences for children in their care and aligns with the submission in an Issue Brief by National Governors Association Centre for Best Practices (2010) that the knowledge and skills of early childhood care providers and teachers are critical factors in their delivery of high-quality developmental and educational experiences to young children.

Moreover, pre-service teachers had high level awareness of different edupreneurial skills embedded in ECE, so, it is expected that enrolment should increase with the level of awareness, yet, the enrolment is very low in the study area going by the total number of admitted students over years now. This result is in contrast with (Olaleye & Omatayo, 2009) who submitted that pre-primary schools are not professionally qualified by lacking professional skills which has worsen ECE in Nigeria.

For the results on the research question 2, it was gathered that pre-service teachers were acquainted with varied skills that could make them job creators and not only job seekers. These skills included skills on improvisation of instructional materials, handling children with special and mental needs; becoming health specialists among others. Consequently, on the preferred edupreneurial skills that pre-service teachers were interested in venturing into after graduation included special children therapist, production of baby bears and toys for sales, a well-equipped centre for special needs children, own personal early childhood education centres, children's literature writer, early childhood education consultant and so on. These showed that the contents of the curriculum have

been able to bring out desired edupreneural skills that could make pre-service teachers to be job creators after graduation. The disturbing issue is that in spite of these edupreneural skills, the rate at which students showed interest in getting admitted for the programme is declining. This may be due to the fact that people are yet to be aware of this new development in Early childhood. This result is in tandem with Jibril (2007) who opined that whatever input is made into an educational system in respect of curriculum improvement, management, resources, facilities and array of instructional materials and methodologies will be of little avail if the teacher is unskilled, poorly trained or even ignorant. Teachers specially those teaching early childhood education are to also be equipped with teaching pedagogical skills that could lead to active learning where learning experiences becomes richer and have positive benefits for students to learn better to improving edupreneural skills.

CONCLUSIONS

This study concluded that the level of pre-service teachers on the awareness of edupreneural skills in ECE is high, that pre-service teachers were able to identify edupreneural skills they were exposed to having being exposed to early childhood education with the newly improved curriculum. Students were able to make choices of different edupreneural skills they would like to venture in after graduation many of which are self-employable skills.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study therefore recommended that government should provide fund in terms of loan that could allow graduates of ECE to establish, be self-employed and self-reliant and be provided with environment that will allow such to grow, if the essence of edupreneural education is to be sustained. Moreso, there should be public awareness on the edupreneural skills embedded in ECE to enhance increase in the enrolment of intending students. Current ECE practitioners and entrepreneurs should make known to the public of their success in the field of Early childhood education.

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