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Exploring Openness to Experience and Undergraduates' Digital Entrepreneurial Intention

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Abstract

The present opinion paper explored the world of digital entrepreneurship and the seeming inexhaustible entrepreneurial opportunities it portends for students to create employment for themselves and employ others. The study discovered that only the experts and the competents in digital entrepreneurship are the ones qualified to seize digital entrepreneurial opportunities as inept have no space to hold unto there. However, while many students do not possess requisite skill, many more do not even know of digital entrepreneurial opportunities, because they have not been exposed to same, despite the fact that ICT course mandates such teachings. The paper is a call for the educator and other stakeholders to practically expound openness to experience in order to enhance learners' self-efficacies and synergize modalities to open them up to the untapped pool of digital employment opportunities. It is hoped that the success of few students in the digital entrepreneurial cyberspace may attract many more students and, unemployment rate might as well be mitigated.

Keywords: Openness to Experience, Digital Entrepreneurial Intention, Digital Employment Opportunities, Digital Entrepreneurial Expertise, and Cyberspace.

Introduction

Digital entrepreneurship has emerged as a frontier and an alternative to the conventional physical entrepreneurial practice, because it can veritably curb the incidence of endemic unemployment among undergraduates and graduates alike. This is so because it can eliminates the hassles associated with carrying on the physical entrepreneurial activities, especially in Nigeria known for difficulties associated with budding, running and succeeding in business. Undergraduates represent a pivotal group that can infest and seize the uncountable entrepreneurial opportunities that abound in the cyberspace to create digital ventures to generate employment opportunities not only for themselves, but also for others, and thus mitigating the socio-economic malaises associated unemployment.

Digital entrepreneurship as a worthwhile career path in Nigeria, can enable entrepreneurs (individuals and companies alike) on one hand,to start and run online businesses without a fixed physical location, thereby avoiding such hassles as high start-up and operational cost of budding a venture, challenge of finding suitable venture location, high overhead costs, slower scalability and market vulnerability as well as incidences of multiple taxation emanating from local and state government tax authorities (Ikwuea, Eyo-Udob, Onunkac, 2024; Osemeke, Nzekwu & Okere, 2020). Besides, physical entrepreneurial venture islimited by market reach, freezes entrepreneur's freedom (in terms of operational hours) and heighten upfront production costs, which altogether plague the operationalization and subsequent success of the physical entrepreneurial venture (Mhlongo, Daraojimba, Olubusola, Ajayi-Nifise & Falaiye, 2024; Ikwuea, Eyo-Udob, Onunkac, Ekweziad, Nwankwoe &

Daraojimba, 2023). Apart from discouraging individuals from choosing digital entrepreneurship as a life career, these issues also deepens the existing unemployment crisis, as Business Education students earmarked to create employment evade this high employer and thus caught up in the quagmire of unemployment (Moses, 2024).

From the foregoing, digital entrepreneurship portends virtually innumerable employment opportunities, but available mostly to the competent individuals (Singh & Dwivedi, 2022). It has significantly shaped the trajectory of global businesses and markets. Most 21st-century companies (in various nomenclatures and sizes) the world over, now assemble and depend on digital workers as against physical staff to carry out conventional organisational tasks hitherto done by physical by staff (Baranauskas & Raišien, 2022). These entities stand to benefit from increased productivity, lower running expenses, flexible and agile work arrangement accruing from seeming inexhaustible pool of remote workforce. This ensures competitive work delivery from the remote workers on the cyberspace alongside unlimited round-the-clock workflow, which completely eliminate the activities of industrial action that can disrupt workflow and result in loss of man-hour (Oshiostea, Eigbadonb, Nwankwoc, Okoyed & Udokwu, 2023). All these benefits enhance the digital entities' scalability, implying that they can grow exponentially without the proportional operational cost increase (Brown, Mawson, Rocha & Rowe, 2025).

On the other hand, the advantages accruing to the remote workers somewhat resonate around a steady and inexhaustible pool of digital job opportunities the world-over (Cruz, 2024). The seeming synergy between the employers (in their various nomenclatures) and the remote digital (expert) job-seekers make the duo conglomerate in a cyberspace system that accommodates exchange of values and compensation (Faruque, Talukder, Pranto, Debnath & Sultana, 2024). The system even facilitates payment and acceptance thereof in hard currencies.

Additionally, it enables a remote worker to adhere to customised workspace, build better work-life balance, allows flexible schedules which enable one to determinehis productivity. These advantages should motivate an average Nigerian Business Education undergraduate to infest the world of digital cyberspace in search of opportunities (either as employer or employee).

Emergence and Proliferation of Digital Enterprises

At its onset, digital companies and remote jobs weremostly dominated by multinational companies such as Google, noted for search engine business, Airbnb (presumed leader in sharing economy), Amazon, renowned for e-commerce, Facebook, arguably leader in social media, and others. However, given the widespread benefits associated with digital entrepreneurship, small, and medium scale enterprises, which represent 90% of the world's companies and responsible for 70% of jobs and GDP globally, verifiably got attracted to join the leagues of multinationals to offer remote jobs to expert workers (Zahari, Manan, Fazlida & Jamaliah, 2024).

As important as digital entrepreneurship is relative to job and wealth creation among Business Education students, it is not been given rightful placein the parlance of entrepreneurship education; just as its delivery is vaguely provided forin the curriculum (Oluwafunmilola, 2024). The school system belittles its importance, just as Instructors virtually trivializesits hands-on and practical delivery; making learners to navigate digital entrepreneurial paths independently. Documented reports abound where students have been extorted in their quest to get certain online marketing training and the likes (Denning, 2023). Most never make it to digital entrepreneurship on the supply nor demand prospect in search of remote jobs, because they are digitally incompetent. It is argued that the little of what students know about digital entrepreneurial opportunities is gotten from the social media; neither from Business Education programme nor the Instructors (Hu & Jabor, 2024).

Additionally, institutions attempt todeliverdigital entrepreneurship outcomes the way its resources–instructors, ICT facilities and equipment permit. Moreso, Instructors somewhat expect learners to sort themselves out in one way or the other and return to write practiced written examination, as against online real-time practical evaluation. It is equally documented that educators generally seem not to showcase the knowledge of these platforms to students, neither does the teaching/learning of entrepreneurship project digital entrepreneurial opportunities to learners at different and rising taxonomies (Egoigwe, Igwe, Agboeze, Imo, Eze, Ali, Nwankwo & Nweke, 2020).In the ensuing imbroglio, Business Education undergraduates are majorly exposed to Keyboarding, the secretarial aspect of ICT-computer course. Theseeming limitation of the use of computer therefore disenfranchises learners of the divergent benefit of digital entrepreneurial experiences both on the supply and demand perspectives. The anomalyactually takes away students'digital entrepreneurial career sources.

The most basic digital literacy endeavor to drive digital entrepreneurial intentions among students starts with offline computer literacy, a construct that introduces learners to the use of computer, allied technologies and accessories without internet connectivity (Santo & Gomes, 2023). The taxonomy of this endeavor begins with the simple ability to boot a computer system, learning the different operating systems and application software for different tasks. However, the foremost reckoned hand-on skills are typing and typesetting (Rahmi & Cerya). While typing connotes the ability to input text by pressing the desired keys on the keyboard, typesetting includesthe composition, editing or distribution of text and/or graph for publication. The utmost learning outcome ofthese hands-on skills therefore is speed and accuracy in data entry using relevant input device and application software.

But the computer as a system does much more than just typesetting. It is asserted that all organisational endeavors ranging from production,

finance, personnel, marketing, operations, have the input of ICT to which the computer is the kingpin (Marashdeh, Mertzanis, El Khoury, Atayah & Dhiaf, 2023). Additionally, virtually all of what organisation need to perform using the computer system is largely covered by the desktop publishing and, by extension, expertise at the use of DTP for organizational success cannot be downplayed. The DTP skills enables the maximisation of computer and relevant software to offer seamless business solutions that would have otherwise required strenuous, complicated human effort and equipment (Editors, Britannica Encyclopedia, 2025). Thus, proficiency in DTP is pivotal for digital business solutions, for digital entrepreneurs and remote workers alike.

However, the persistently low entrepreneurial cyberspace presence among Business Education students in southwest Nigeria is alarming. It is reported that between 2–4% of students possess essential digital marketable skills requisite to take part in digital entrepreneurial venture (Onwubuya & Ikechukwu, 2023). The situation poses as affront to the realization of the cardinal objectives of Business Education of massive creation of job, to mitigate the endemic unemployment situation (Ile, 2024). It also raises questions about the effectiveness of entrepreneurship education in cultivating a genuine digital entrepreneurial mindset among learners (Moses, 2024). This is against the backdrop that digital entrepreneurial courses earmarked to deliver digital skills to learners are incorporated in ICT-computer related courses (Onwubuya & Ikechukwu, 2023). Students' inability to infest digital entrepreneurial cyberspace thus creates a gap that is particularly pronounced given the high expectations for these students to contribute effectively to the economy. This challenge is further exacerbated by instructor-related factors, who themselves are not digitally proficient, lack practical and experiential wherewithal, as well as update knowledge of the world of entrepreneurial cyberspace digitalisation (Osiesi, Adegboyega, Fadiya & Blignaut, 2024). These anomalies collectively stifle

digital entrepreneurial spirit among students (Mhlongo, Daraojimba, Olubusola, Ajayi-Nifise & Falaiye, 2024).

Theoretical Framework

This paper leverages on the social network theory, a construct that highlights how individuals' online connections and relationships across diverse social media platforms can influence their access to entrepreneurial information, resources, potential customers and collaborators to make them bud, grow and compete in the world of digital entrepreneurship. The theory postulates that activism in the social media powered by the Internet, the World Wide Web (WWW), and mobile technology that is intentionally directed at digital entrepreneurship can influence one's digital prowess and eventual entrepreneurial success. Individuals can deploy such special features as digital platforms and media, Artificial Intelligence (AI), cloud computing, and the robotics, to either search for and/or convert entrepreneurial ideas into products and services that satisfy the consumer pain-points; or simple engage same in remote work. Meanwhile, to even attain the requisite expertise needed to operate in the cyberspace (as employer or remote worker), these special features also lend themselves as training kits that Instructors can deploy to inculcate digital entrepreneurial competence in learners.

Teaching Digital Entrepreneurship to Learners

Teaching digital entrepreneurship to students involves intentional deployment of digital tools and platforms to enrich their competence to create, market, and deliver products and services to customers in the cyberspace. This educational endeavor most likely requires the use of online courses, ICT resources and media deployedin an enabling environment to help learners understand and create unique digital business models and bundles that conform rather closely to target market. It also envisages the delivery of proficiency in the use digital tools

to find resources, team members, and secure jobs.Thiscan enable learners identify and blend to the ever-changing trends and developments in digital technologies.

The surest ways to deliver these outcomes to learners necessitate the use of practical and experiential teaching methods, which highlights the experiential role of the Instructor who must facilitate learners' experiences through interactive, collaborative, and responsiveness to their needs and feedback. It is also pivotal that he is able to design relevant, engaging and challenginglearning activities at increasing taxonomies. Additionally, it is expedient that he incorporates experiential learning maneuvers so learners can apply their knowledge to real-world problems. His assessment and evaluation strategies need be practical, and be tactful to avoid praise, even if students perform well. The summary of these entail that the Instructor be able to use ICT-related media and digital tools to organize, retrieve, store, and analyze lessonsin the digital content practically. Moreso,he can useextracurricular activities to expose learners to field-trips where mentorship initiatives and entrepreneurship accelerators can facilitate practical and experiential learning.

The present paper opines that the practice of physical entrepreneurship be first honed through formal entrepreneurship education strategies of teaching "for." teaching "about" and teaching "through"strategies before exposing leaners to venture in the digital platforms. This is because digital entrepreneurship somewhat operates within the entities similar to physical entrepreneurship, such as capital, resources, and people (Cámara, Alessandro, Ćwiklicki, Fuentes, Herold, Kraus, Kraus, Laurisz, Magliocca, Marín, Mikl, Pacut, Schiavone, Shtepa, Antonio & Utrilla, 2021). Antecedents of capital constructinclude thepossession of requisite hardware devices such as the computer system as well as domain-specific knowledge/endowments of and skills in the manipulation of the accompanying application software (Mir, Hassan &

Khan, 2023). Resources on the other hand, are the digital tools, platforms, and technologies one can deploy to create, grow, and run a digital entrepreneurial venture (Nik & Nik, 2023). They range from digitalized systems that improve efficiency and productivity at reduce costs; cyberspace channels such as social media, e-commerce platforms, and other online channels dedicated to enable one identify opportunities and reach customers; the Internet, to which one can access the cyberspace addresses of employers and be accessed also (Nik&Nik, 2023).

The people construct first revolves around individuals who undertake the risk to start a digital start-up, which is why the emphasis here is placed on one understanding hisentrepreneurial personality trait, entrepreneurial psychology, motivation and relative contextual discovery of digital entrepreneurial tendencies. Generally however, acomplex network of "people" entity also includeall stakeholders in cyberspace such as online employers, other digital entrepreneurial competitors, scammers, e-wallet operators, myriads of online digital trainers, and many others. An educational construct that can enhance one's ability to successfully relate with these stakeholders in relation to capital, resource and network of people, most likely reflects the construct of openness to experience.

Openness to Experience

Openness to experience is a construct associated with a person's reception of new ideas ignited by his level of curiosity,creativity, and appreciation for variety, all of which canelicithismental esthetic and synthetic cognition most needed to see him through the competitive and unpredictable digital entrepreneurial environment (Sun, Shi, Chen, Yang, Wei, Zhang, Zhang, & Qiu, 2019). It is a vital construct most needed in the delivery of digital entrepreneurial experience because it can motivate learners to channel their intuitionto digitalcreativity, imagination, and curiosity towards venturing in digital entrepreneurship. Apart from

influencing motivation, it can also guide oneto navigate the risky entrepreneurial paths. If properly delivered to learners, openness to experience can compel one to willfully explore new ideas, embrace change, and learn from diverse perspectives. It so therantecedents like passion, risk-taking, and resilience, canenable one attempt to identify entrepreneurial opportunities, overcome obstacles, and build a successful digital venture. Individuals with this trait can start digital start-up, where curiosity about a new phenomenon dominates. Curiosity can engender performance and, where performance is stalled, resilience, a road-clearingfeature, can pave the way through challenges. Needless to emphasise that openness to experience can drive entrepreneurial intentions among students.

Delivering Openness to Experience to arouse Students' Digital Entrepreneurial Tendencies

A pedagogy that open uplearners tomyriaduntapped entrepreneurial career opportunities that abound in the cyberspace can signpost the foundation in the deliveryof openness to experience. Literatures have affirmed that the faintest ideas students haveon myriad entrepreneurial career opportunities existing on the cyberspace are gotten from social media and not learnt in school (Abdus-Samad, Hossain, Whiteside & Mercieca, 2020). Then the emphatic Instructor can create a classroom environment that encourages learners to explore and experiment their entrepreneurial pet project, underlying the bedrock of continuous hard work. This can encourage a growth mindset among a team.This kind of pedagogy possibly involves experiential learning and inquiry-based strategies, where learners working in a team can value each other's ideas as they explore. The Instructor can purposefully engage students with hands-on performance and focused reflection while encouraging them to seek out multiple perspectives to digital entrepreneurship. He practically design, demonstrate, and implement hands-on experience by implementing learning-by-doing instructional strategy. Needless to say

that he needs to demonstrate online navigation, as well as undertake in-depth elucidation of cyberspace phenomena – all aimed to increase knowledge, develop skills, and clarify values. Additionally, teaching openness to experience construes the deployment of e-learning strategy amongst others, to deliver digital entrepreneurial experiences. Since e-learning depicts majorly the use of electronic media, typically on the internet with varying cyberspace resources, institutions can leverage on ICT curriculum.To possibly deliver this experience to a large number of students, the Instructor can deploy the Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), a content-based, task-based, or network-based construct which experts claim is engaging, accessible, measurable, and scalable.

Conclusion

The opportunities in world of digital entrepreneurship, either as digital entrepreneur or remote worker, seem inexhaustible, though it welcomes only the expert and the competent into cyberspace. It seems truism that business education undergraduates are certain to join the rate-race of unemployment because they do not embrace the digital entrepreneurial work platforms as they do not possess the requisite expertise needed there. Many more do not know or heard of such employment-creating platforms because Instructors who do not know themselves cannot offer what they do not have. The few students who have heard about digital entrepreneurship through social media most likely 'stumble' or crash into that space, mostly with lackadaisical attitude and cannot make a career out of it. Instructor with update knowledge of digital entrepreneurship needs to instruct them; equip them with relevant pedagogic and didactic interventions and release them to explore the digital entrepreneurial opportunities especially that of their pet projects.

The educator should set learners in teams and deploy the best practice of learner-centre pedagogic and didactic learning system. Then the learners will release themselves either as digital entrepreneurs or

remote workerto the world of digital entrepreneurial platforms to compete and secure digital entrepreneurial jobs against the best applicants in the world. Apart from providing financial stability through stable income, enhanced sense of purpose and accomplishment, digital information superhighway can also offer opportunities for personal and professional growth as well as create room for accumulation of human and material capital.

Way Forward

1. The delivery of digital entrepreneurial experience to learners requires empathetic instructors who would be keen to see leaners taken off unemployment roll. Institutions in conjunction with relevant departments can institute the required structure.
2. The Instructor must necessarily possess practical and experiential digital entrepreneurial acumen evidenced in hands-on ability. This is especially important since the white-elephant entrepreneurial centres established in public institutions have literally failed to make digital entrepreneurs out of students.
3. Institutions need to provide the conducive physical environment, ICT facilities and media that permit the teaching and learning of digital entrepreneurship.
4. The concerned department should target to produce digital entrepreneurs that can serve as pointers to encourage increased number of business education students.
5. Institutions should pursue the delivery of digital entrepreneurship within limit of physical and media resources. Reality, instead of flamboyancy needs be instituted. Successful digital student entrepreneur can be a showpiece to encourage others.
6. Institutions can empower Business Education Instructor with additional digital entrepreneurship training.
7. Instructors so empowered should be held accountable for students' proficiency in digital entrepreneurship education.

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