



MANAGING ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION AND UNDERGRADUATES' JOB CREATION PROPENSITY POST COVID-19 IN UNIVERSITIES IN CROSS RIVER STATE, NIGERIA

OFEM, WOKASOR ENI; OJINI, RICHARD AYUH; OMINI ETTA ETTA, NSAN, NSAN NJA, UNIMKE, SYLVERSTER; OBETEN, OKOI OKORN; AND EKPOTO EKPOTO AGBOR

(Received 5, July 2023; Revision Accepted 28, July 2023)

ABSTRACT

This study looked at how managing entrepreneurship education affects undergraduates' tendency to create job post-COVID-19 in universities in Cross River State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study assessed the influence of e-learning and blended learning on creativity and self-employment among 370 undergraduates drawn from 4,993 final year students of 2021/2022 academic session from all the faculties in University of Calabar and Cross River University of Technology respectively. The study adopted correlational research design. To guide the study, two null hypotheses were developed. A structured questionnaire titled: "Managing Entrepreneurship Education and Undergraduates' Job Creation Propensity Questionnaire (MEEUJCPQ)", was designed and used for data collection. Multiple Linear Regression Analysis was used to statistically examine the collected data. Results from testing of the hypotheses revealed that managing entrepreneurship education in terms of e-learning and blended learning has a significant effect on both undergraduates' creativity and self-employment. Based on the study's findings, we assert that managing entrepreneurship education through e-learning and blended learning, individually and collectively, predicts undergraduates' propensity to create job by exuding creativity and self-employment characteristics.

KEYWORDS: Managing entrepreneurship education, job creation, creativity, e-learning, blended learning, COVID-19

Ofem, Wokasor Eni, Department of Educational Management, University of Calabar, P.M.B 1115 Cross River State, Nigeria

Ojini, Richard Ayuh, Department of Educational Management, University of Calabar, P.M.B 1115 Cross River State, Nigeria

Omini Etta Etta, Department of Educational Foundations, University of Calabar, P.M.B 1115 Cross River State, Nigeria

Nsan, Nsan Nja, Department of Social Science Education, University of Calabar, P.M.B 1115 Cross River State, Nigeria

Unimke, Sylverster, Department of Educational Management, University of Calabar, P.M.B 1115 Cross River State, Nigeria

Obeten, Okoi Okorn, Department of Educational Management, University of Calabar, P.M.B 1115 Cross River State, Nigeria

Ekpoto Ekpoto Agbor,

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria, a microcosm in the world, was not insulated and isolated from the impact of the dreaded COVID-19 global pandemic.

The halting of all physical and socioeconomic activities during the lockdown led to increase in Nigeria's unemployment rate from 27.1 percent in 2nd quarter of 2020 to 33.3 percent in 4th quarter of the same year (Nike, Okechukwu, Joseph & Temiloluwa, 2021). Consequently, most macroeconomics pundits attributed the ups and downs within the period under review to a reduction in job creation propensity by undergraduates cum graduates due to the halt in pedagogical processes occasioned by the COVID-19 lockdown as was characterized by restriction of movement and physical distancing. The Corona Virus (COVID-19) outbreak began in Wuhan, China on December 8, 2019, and within a fortnight; there was an overwhelming increase of infected persons outside China. With considerable trepidation, World Health Organization declared the novel human coronavirus a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) on January 30, 2020, (World Health Organization, 2020). Being a virus with high contagiousness, sociopolitical and economic repercussions were imminent; this created accusations of politicization globally as WHO rolled out non-pharmaceutical measures like social distancing, the use of nose masks, sneezing into a bent elbow, and hand-washing, among other measures to curb the spread of the virus. Significant steps taken by Nigeria and the international community to mitigate the spread of the virus ranged from the closure of countries' borders to lockdown. These steps culminated in competition for health workers, and restrictions on cross-border shipment and travel. The situation sparked the ingenious faculty of many with an amplified struggle for essential therapeutic devices by countries respectively (Ratten & Jones, 2020). According to Worldometers (2021), COVID-19 cases surged to 223, 441,854. Total deaths spiked to 4,610.408 with 221 countries affected. Nigeria's total number of cases stood at 197,046; total deaths stood at 2,578; total number of recovered stood at 185,379; total tests was 2,884,034 from a population of 212,178,992 (Worldometers, 2021).

The lockdown and social distancing requirements from the COVID-19 pandemic altered the economic condition of many and provided time for entrepreneurial students to study online. Furthermore, outdoor activities ranging from travel, business, and formal education were all affected. Nigerian learners adapted to electronic learning as a pedagogical method to complement the face-to-face learning method but were frustrated by the COVID-19 pandemic and the lockdown.

In an attempt to increase undergraduates' inclination to job creation post-COVID-19, it became imperative for university education managers to adopt appropriate teaching techniques such as e-learning and blended learning. Undergraduates' job creation propensity is a function of entrepreneurial education in that the latter teaches the former, relevant knowledge, skills, attitude, and behavior for business startups. Therefore, managing entrepreneurship education in a generic sense involves the instrumentality of planning, organizing, directing, coordinating, budgeting, and controlling during teaching and learning processes. However, the objective of this process is realizable by using available human, material, and financial resources effectively and efficiently with the ultimate goal of job creation and self-employment by undergraduates upon graduation. Utilizing e-learning and other traditional learning methods for teaching undergraduates entrepreneurial principles and values is an alternative approach to managing entrepreneurship education.

Social media is one of the components of e-learning. It refers to a shared or networked conversation that contains a form of advertising or suggested story or experience, conveyed through a range of set-ups: print, audiovisual, and still image for sharing, comments, or individual consumption. Social media is a method that emphasizes conversation with other learners. A preponderance of the young population born in the 21st-century digital period accepts social networking sites (SNS) and frequently enmesh their daily routine in communication with their kith and kin using social media sites, which is observed as an approved mode of developing social relations (Chen et al. 2021).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Underscoring the rationale for introducing entrepreneurship education to tertiary education institutions in Nigeria, Ofem, Akuegwu, and Udey (2017), found that rising unemployment in the country stimulated the government of Nigeria to impress on all regulatory agencies of higher educational institutions to design instruments for the introduction, development, and sustenance of entrepreneurial culture amongst students. As a policy decision in 2004, the Federal Government of Nigeria, through the National Universities Commission directed all universities to include entrepreneurship education in their curriculum (Ofem, Obeten, & Ndem 2015; Undiyaundeye & Otu 2015). Managing entrepreneurship education for universities in Cross River State is carried out through their respective directorates of entrepreneurship. In these centers, lecturers and facilitators with cognate experience are engaged to teach undergraduates in line with the developed course outline and content. The resources allocated for the program's production purposes are channeled towards transforming undergraduates into finished products where the inculcation of knowledge, skills, attitude, and behavior occur to push job creation propensity (Ojule, 2020).

In an attempt to demystify the concept of entrepreneurship education, Uchendu, et al. (2015), aver that it entails changing a conception into reality, leading to independence and job creation. Furthermore, it is the process of providing the required knowledge and skills for business opportunity recognition with the ability to take necessary action. Curriculum development and content forms the scope of managing entrepreneurship education in relation to steps involved in starting and growing a new business. However, there is no contradiction that entrepreneurship education imparts entrepreneurial values such as innovativeness, risk-taking, determination, creativity, locus of control, self-confidence and discipline, originality, flexibility and resourcefulness, leadership skills, among others in undergraduates' (Uchendu, et al. 2015). It is strength from the above attributes that Raposo and Paco (2011), observe that entrepreneurship education is targeted at recommending individuals within the active young population bracket to be accountable and full of industry, be entrepreneurially-minded, be self-reliant, and contribute to the nation's gross domestic product.

While managing entrepreneurship education, learners not only imbibe the principles for business start-ups but also acquire knowledge that provides new impetus to hunt openings by creating new concepts and raising required resources. In this study, two instructional approaches are used in the inculcation of creative and critical thinking skills to solve community problems and learn how to be tenacious, resourceful, proactive, purposeful, diligent, and resilient amidst unforeseen circumstances like the COVID-19 pandemic. These approaches are e-learning and blended learning.

Electronic learning, (also known as e-learning) can be said to be any technically facilitated learning that uses computers either from far or physically in a classroom setting. It is a departure from conventional instruction or training to information communication technology-based. E-learning is meant for individual learners with flexible features like self-organized and collective learning; centered on a community of learners, facilitators, and experts (Mgbere, 2016). Blended learning, on the other hand, embraces the merits of both traditional classroom teaching and information communication technology (ICT) supported learning. Blended learning is e-learning combined with other learning methods. It has a great deal of latitude for allied forms of learning like collaborative, constructive, and computer-assisted learning.

The building of group network of social relations where undergraduates communicate with each other about their lives and work experiences through WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Research Gate, etcetera, is for taking of entrepreneurship education courses. Through these channels, they collaborate and share information about business start-up intentions cum ideas. For lecturers and students to positively juxtapose and elect the most appealing know-how to realize entrepreneurial course objectives, Chen, et al. (2021), conducted a study on methodological investigation of research focusing on blended and online entrepreneurial teaching and learning. The result from the systematic review showed that before the pandemic, learners may have still preferred the face-to-face method compared to the online and blended form, despite the amplified attractiveness of the latter. Nonetheless, throughout COVID-19 when accessibility of courses remained online, there has been

amplified interest in online and blended entrepreneurship education courses. It therefore befits entrepreneurship instructors to maintain high-quality instructional methods as the achievement of upcoming entrepreneurs is contingent on it (Ratten & Jones, 2020).

In an attempt to explore fundamental content areas and instructional interferences through which one can develop a blended learning method for entrepreneurship students, Frederick (2007), reviewed the instructional necessities of entrepreneurs and their learning styles. The author designed a blended learning atmosphere of direct and online methods that could improve their learning experience. The study aimed to summarize, simplify, organize, and interpret intricate modes of information into an agreeable form from the instructional viewpoint that could be valuable for constructing commercial ventures of all kinds. The study posed four research questions and a range of "information-rich cases" using a proposition that entrepreneurs absorb information differently from other learners. The author developed the "Etappe" mode of teaching entrepreneurs using a blended learning method for the technology-perceptive group with the slogan: "teaching is best online, while learning is best in the classroom." Relying on the concept of experiential learning as concretized by learning styles records; entrepreneurs, in their distinctive teachable moments, needed active and concrete pedagogical interventions that can enhance a blended environment of online and face-to-face modalities leading them step-by-step through deepening learning in the theory, process, and practice of entrepreneurship. The study concluded that the means to transform creative ideas into commercially viable businesses is critical for entrepreneurs and that educational attainment is necessary to commercialize ideas.

A case study by Poon (2013), examined the benefits that blended learning provides to students' learning experiences. Data was collected from lecturers and students using a questionnaire. The study revealed a mutual view between the students and lecturers that blended learning provides flexibility for students. Both lecturers and students found utilization of a wide array of teaching methods aided students' learning. Furthermore, the study found that students with different learning speeds and styles gained from using unlike learning methods in strengthening their learning capabilities and potentiality. Therefore, universities in Cross River

State, Nigeria, are not insulated from the epileptic power supply suffered by the generality of the nation's population. Hence, the deployment of blended learning instructional methods comes in handy post-COVID-19 and the absence of a consistent public power supply.

Another study by Metilda and Neena (2017) looked at how learning to improve the employability skills of business management graduates from three different contexts (Tamilnadu, Karnataka, and PGDM institute) was influenced by digital technologies. Employers from selected industry sectors carefully assessed business management graduates' skill levels. The selection variable was availability of digital technology in school settings with an impact on the average process skill. The dependent variable was students' specific process abilities. The predicted value obtained from multiple linear regression analysis was compared with the mean value to determine the variance of the skill set. Furthermore, a regression equation (Process skill Predicted value = $0 + 1 * \text{mean of the process skill}$) was used to describe the variation in employability caused by process skill, where the mean was determined from the descriptive statistics. Employability skills of graduates from institutions with facilities have a high average (6.04) and low F value, as indicated by the predicted variation in process skills of 5.09 being higher in institutions without ICT facilities than those with ICT facilities. However, graduates from institutions without ICT facilities have a mean process skill of 11.92. The difference in digital skills demonstrates poorer digital skills and a wide range in employability. The study concluded that digitized e-learning influences the formation of process skills, which affects graduates' employability.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The introduction of entrepreneurship education in tertiary educational institutions in Nigeria through the National Universities Commission aimed at addressing students' unlikelihood to be job creators upon graduation. The acquisition of related knowledge and skills by undergraduates is fundamental to self-employment and job creation, especially post-COVID-19 pandemic. Unfortunately, in the wake of COVID-19, many university undergraduates in Cross River State are inactive and dormant without any indication of intent to launch new businesses. This tendency is problematic since it cannot help Nigeria's

university system achieve its aims for entrepreneurial education. The employment-seeking choice persists despite all attempts by the government and other relevant stakeholders to reorient undergraduates and shift their attitudes about job creation and self-employment. Perhaps, this has made Nigeria's youth unemployment rate worse. Since all attempts to alter the narrative has been fruitless, the researchers wonder whether managing entrepreneurship education affects undergraduates' job creation propensity.

As a result, the problem of this study put in a question form is: How does managing entrepreneurship education in terms of students' creativity and self-employment affect undergraduates' job creation propensity in universities in Cross River State?

Hypotheses

Two null hypotheses were formulated to guide the study as follows:

1. There is no significant influence of managing entrepreneurship education in terms of blended learning and e-learning on undergraduates' creativity.
2. There is no significant influence of managing entrepreneurship education in terms of blended learning and e-learning on undergraduates' self-employment.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a correlational research design to determine whether an increase or decrease in the independent variable in terms of blended learning and e-learning influences the dependent variables (undergraduates' creativity and self-employment) in like manner (Asim, et al. 2017). The population stood at 4,993 final-year undergraduates of the 2020/2021 academic session from all the faculties at the University of Calabar and Cross River University of

Technology. Using Taro Yamane's sample size calculation formula, 370 undergraduates were selected to form the sample of the study. The study's objective was realized using a two-part validated questionnaire for data collection titled: "Managing Entrepreneurship Education and Undergraduates' Job Creation Propensity Questionnaire (MEEUJCPQ)". Part I consisted of 5 demographic variables; part II consisted of two sections. Section I consisted of 12 items that examined undergraduates' adaptation to e-learning and blended learning in entrepreneurship education. Section II contained 12 items that examined undergraduates' job creation propensity, in terms of creativity and self-employment. To test the two null hypotheses formulated for the study, the 24 items from sections I and II were on a four-point Likert scale varying from Strongly Agree (4 points), Agree (3 points), Disagree (2 points), and Strongly Disagree (1 point).

Experts in measurement and evaluation validated the instrument, and a trial test adopting the Cronbach alpha reliability method yielded coefficients ranging from "r" 0.70 to "r" 0.82. These results were deemed to be reliable for use in this study. The researchers with the support of two assistants collected data with a 100 percent return rate. Collected data were statistically analyzed using IBM SPSS version 23.0 and Multiple Linear Regression Analysis.

RESULTS

Hypothesis one

There is no significant influence of managing entrepreneurship education in terms of blended learning and e-learning on undergraduates' creativity. Multiple Linear Regression Analysis test statistic was employed in testing data for this hypothesis. Results of the analysis are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Regression analysis of students' job creation propensity in terms of creativity using e-learning and blended learning

| Model | Sum of Squares | Df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|------------|----------------|-----|-------------|---------|-------------------|
| Regression | 1291.265 | 2 | 645.633 | 127.267 | .000 ^b |
| 1 Residual | 1861.805 | 367 | 5.073 | | |
| Total | 3153.070 | 369 | | | |

| Model | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | T | Sig. |
|------------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|-------|------|
| | B | Std. Error | Beta | | |
| (Constant) | 4.372 | .539 | | 8.109 | .000 |
| e-learning | .177 | .062 | .154 | 2.836 | .005 |
| blended-learning | .568 | .059 | .526 | 9.666 | .000 |

The results presented in Table 1, indicates how managing entrepreneurial education in terms of e-learning and blended learning affects undergraduates' creativity. The outcome shows that, at the 0.05 level of significance with 367 degrees of freedom, the calculated f value of 127.267 is greater than the critical f value of 3.02. This means that managing entrepreneurship education in terms of blended learning and e-learning has a significant influence on undergraduates' creativity post-COVID-19 era. The null hypothesis is rejected as a result, and the alternate hypothesis is accepted. Furthermore, the coefficient in Table 1 shows that a percentage increase in e-learning while other variables are held constant, will lead to a 17.7 percent increase in undergraduates' creativity post-COVID-19 era, and a percentage change in blended learning while other variables are held constant will lead to 56.8 percent decrease in undergraduates' creativity post-COVID-19 era.

Moreover, the calculated t value for e-learning (2.836) and blended learning (9.666) is greater than the $p < .05$ at the 0.05 level of significance with 368 degrees of freedom according to the t statistics in Table 1. This suggests that post-COVID-19 era; managing entrepreneurial education (including e-learning and blended learning) has a significant influence on undergraduates' creativity.

The R^2 of the multiple linear regressions in Table 2 measures the degree of determination coefficient of predictors with respect to blended learning and e-learning on undergraduates' creativity post COVID-19 era. It predicts that 41 percent of the variation in undergraduates' creativity post-COVID-19 era is explained by the variation of predictors in terms of blended learning and e-learning, 59 percent of the variation in the undergraduates' creativity post-COVID-19 era is explained by other variables which are extraneous to the study.

Table 2: Summary of Multiple regression (R) analysis measuring the degree of determination coefficient of predictors in terms of e-learning and blended learning on undergraduates' creativity

| Model | R | R Square | Adjusted Square | R | Std. Error of the Estimate | Durbin-Watson |
|-------|-------------------|----------|-----------------|-------|----------------------------|---------------|
| 1 | .640 ^a | .410 | .406 | 2.252 | 1.819 | |

Hypothesis two

There is no significant influence of managing entrepreneurship education in terms of blended learning and e-learning on undergraduates' self-employment.

Data for this hypothesis were tested using statistics from multiple linear regression analysis.

Table 3 shows the analysis findings. Result of analysis in Table 3 shows the predictive composite influence of managing entrepreneurship education in terms of blended learning and e-learning on undergraduates' self-employment post COVID-19 era.

Table 3: Regression analysis of undergraduates' job creation propensity in terms of self-employment using blended learning and e-learning

| Model | | Sum of Squares | Df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|-------|------------|----------------|-----|-------------|---------|-------------------|
| 1 | Regression | 1328.198 | 2 | 664.099 | 216.698 | .000 ^b |
| | Residual | 1124.721 | 367 | 3.065 | | |
| | Total | 2452.919 | 369 | | | |

| Model | | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | T | Sig. |
|------------------|--|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|-------|------|
| | | B | Std. Error | Beta | | |
| (Constant) | | 3.429 | .419 | | 8.182 | .000 |
| e-learning | | .456 | .048 | .451 | 9.405 | .000 |
| Blended learning | | .335 | .046 | .352 | 7.348 | .000 |

The results showed that, at the 0.05 level of significance with 367 degrees of freedom, the calculated f-value of 216.698 is greater than the critical f-value of 3.02. This indicates that managing entrepreneurship education in terms of blended and e-learning has a significant influence on undergraduates' self-employment post COVID-19 era. By this result, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternate is accepted. Furthermore, the coefficient in Table 3 shows that, a percentage increase in e-learning while other variables are held constant will lead to 45.6 percent increase on undergraduates' self-employment post-COVID-19 era, and a

percentage change in blended learning while other variables are held constant will lead to 33.5 percent decrease in undergraduates' self-employment post-COVID-19 era. Moreover, Table 3's t-statistics shows that the calculated t-values for blended learning and e-learning (7.348 and 9.405, respectively) are greater than the critical t-value of 1.966 at the 0.05 level of significance with 368 degrees of freedom. This means that managing entrepreneurship education in terms of blended learning and e-learning has significant influence on undergraduates' self-employment post-COVID-19 era.

Table 4: Summary of Multiple regression (R) measuring the degree of determination coefficient of predictors (e-learning and blended learning) on undergraduates' self-employment

| Model | R | R Square | Adjusted Square | R | Std. Error of the Estimate | Durbin-Watson |
|-------|-------------------|----------|-----------------|-------|----------------------------|---------------|
| 1 | .736 ^a | .541 | .539 | 1.751 | 1.751 | 1.318 |

The R^2 of the multiple linear regression in Table 4 measures the degree of determination coefficient of predictors in terms of blended learning and e-learning on undergraduates' self-employment. It predicts that .541 R^2 of variation in undergraduates' self-employment post-COVID-19 is explained by a change of predictors in terms of blended learning and e-learning. Furthermore, 54.10% of change in undergraduates' self-employment post-COVID-19 is explained by other variables extraneous to the study.

DISCUSSION

Hypothesis one:

Findings from analysis of hypothesis 1 indicate that managing entrepreneurship education in terms of blended learning and e-learning has a significant influence on undergraduates' creativity post-COVID-19. This finding reinforces the increasing number of higher education students who sign up for online tutorials and have sustained them during and after the pandemic. A percentage increase in e-learning, while other variables are held constant, leads to a percentage increase in undergraduates' creativity during the period under review.

Conversely, a percentage change in blended learning while other variables are constant leads to a percentage decrease in undergraduates' creativity. This implies that, increased participation in entrepreneurial education through e-learning increases students' ability to use imagination to produce a novel idea, product, or service and vice versa. These findings are in agreement with Chen et al. (2021), whose study on the systematic analysis of research on blended and online entrepreneurial learning and teaching indicates that before the COVID-19 pandemic, learners continued to prefer the face-to-face method over the online and blended version, despite the latter's rising popularity.

Nevertheless, there appears to be accelerated interest in online and blended entrepreneurship education courses since the COVID-19 pandemic, when the only available courses of study were online. Therefore, entrepreneurial educators need to maintain high-quality pedagogical approaches as reinforcement for the use of result-oriented instructional methods because the success of future entrepreneurs depends on it.

Findings from the study of Hypothesis 1 are also consistent with Frederick's (2007) conclusion that entrepreneurs have a prodigious obstacle in turning creative thoughts into profitable ventures. From the above conclusion, it becomes clear that entrepreneurship education through e-learning at a time when face-to-face or physical contact is impracticable or reduced is essential to commercialize ideas.

Hypothesis two:

Findings from the analysis of hypothesis 2 show the predictive composite influence of managing entrepreneurship education in terms of blended learning and e-learning on undergraduates' self-employment post-COVID-19. This finding is supported by the increasing deployment of e-learning as an alternative to other traditional methods, especially when physical convergence for socioeconomic engagement is manifestly impossible.

A percentage increase in e-learning, while other variables are held constant, leads to a percentage increase in undergraduates' creativity during the period under review. Conversely, a percentage change in blended learning while other variables are unchanged will lead to a percentage decrease in undergraduates' self-employment. This finding is evident in the increased utilization of e-learning that ultimately increases undergraduates' inclination to set up businesses and become one's bosses, and vice versa.

The analysis of hypothesis 2 results is consistent with Metilda and Neena's (2017) study, which found that digitized e-learning affects the development of process skills that influences undergraduates' self-employment. Inference from the above findings is that managing entrepreneurship education by the university administration concerning the deployment of innovative pedagogy like blended learning and e-learning will significantly influence students' job creation propensity by exuding creativity and self-employment characteristics.

CONCLUSION

After looking at how managing entrepreneurship education affects undergraduates' propensity to create jobs. We specifically assessed the influence of e-learning and blended learning on the creativity and self-employment of undergraduates. We discovered that there is a significant effect on both undergraduates' creativity and self-employment. Based on the study's findings, we assert that, managing entrepreneurship education through e-learning and blended learning, individually and collectively, predicts undergraduates' propensity to create jobs by exuding creativity and self-employment characteristics. In other words, managing entrepreneurship education through e-learning and blended learning has a significant effect on undergraduates' creativity and self-employment.

RECOMMENDATIONS

From these study findings, we make the following recommendations:

1. Stakeholders in university education should invest more in entrepreneurship education and provide the necessary infrastructure and facilities to encourage creativity and self-employment.
2. Fiscal policy intervention from the Central Bank of Nigeria should focus on increasing the number of entrepreneurs by providing them with venture start-up grants and incentives, which will facilitate employment generation for economic growth.
3. From the vista of opportunities provided by the lockdown, managers of entrepreneurship education should reset business approaches like small and medium-scale enterprises as well as hospitality sectors; that emphasize community-based initiatives for reorganizing entrepreneurial processes to capitalize on local people and communities for social good.

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