

Motivations for enrolling in university courses: Insights from an entrepreneurship course



Author:

Adolph C. Neethling¹ 

Affiliation:

¹Department of Business Management, Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences, Stellenbosch University, Stellenbosch, South Africa

Research Project Registration:

Project Number: 14414

Corresponding author:

Adolph Neethling,
acn@sun.ac.za

Dates:

Received: 27 Nov. 2022

Accepted: 29 Sept. 2023

Published: 19 Jan. 2024

How to cite this article:

Neethling, A.C., 2024, 'Motivations for enrolling in university courses: Insights from an entrepreneurship course', *Southern African Journal of Entrepreneurship and Small Business Management* 16(1), a673. <https://doi.org/10.4102/sajesbm.v16i1.673>

Copyright:

© 2024. The Author. Licensee: AOSIS. This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution License.

Read online:



Scan this QR code with your smart phone or mobile device to read online.

Background: Studies on the impact of entrepreneurship education (EE) have produced mixed results, leading researchers to examine the reason for such inconsistencies. This article examines course enrolment motivation, as a possible factor contributing to the inconsistency in findings on EE impact studies.

Aim: This study aims to identify whether students registered for a business degree exhibit different motivations for enrolling for a course in entrepreneurship and should such differences be found, to identify what the different motivations are.

Setting: Data are collected from second-year students registered for a business degree at a South African university.

Methods: Using purposive sampling, a survey was circulated to second-year business students in class after which the data were subjected to a principal component analysis to check for differences in motivation.

Results: Three categories of responses were identified proving that there were statistically distinguishable differences in enrolment motivation.

Conclusion: Three course motivational factors explain why students choose to register for an entrepreneurship course.

Contribution: This study finds that not all students who have enrolled for a course in entrepreneurship have a desire or interest in entrepreneurship. This study suggests items and dimensions for measuring course enrolment motivation. Hence, the study also introduces a new measure that should be considered in future studies on the impact of EE and suggests further studies to confirm whether it impacts on EE.

Keywords: entrepreneurship education; course enrolment; motivation; principal component analysis; impact studies.

Introduction

South Africa battles with high unemployment figures with an official unemployment rate in quarter one of 2022 of 34.5% and an expanded unemployment rate of 45.5% (STATSSA 2022:26). The unemployment rate among the young graduates (aged 15 years to 24 years) is 32.6% and that among graduates aged 25 years to 34 years, 22.4%. These high figures suggest that not all graduates can expect to be absorbed as employees in the formal marketplace and hence need to be equipped to identify opportunities, acquire skills and competencies and the belief to use the knowledge and skills that they acquired as students, to exploit opportunities in the marketplace.

Various researchers have emphasised the importance of entrepreneurship education (EE) and the fact that entrepreneurship can be taught, or at a minimum, be encouraged through EE (Gamede & Uleanya 2019; Katz 2003; Kuratko 2005). Recognition of the important role of entrepreneurship towards economic growth has led to the establishment of many entrepreneurship courses at universities, yet there is no consensus on the impact of such courses.

Studies on the impact of EE have reported mixed results. In a systematic review on the impact of EE in higher education, Nabi et al. (2017) found that several studies reported mixed, negative, nonsignificant or ambiguous results for the link between EE and Entrepreneurial Intention. Likewise, studies on the impact of EE programs on attitudes and behaviour have also produced mixed results, displaying both positive and negative outcomes (Dickson, Solomon & Weaver 2008; Fayolle 2013; Martin, McNally & Kay 2013; Nabi et al. 2017; Omotosho, Gamede & Uleanya 2020;

Thompson, Jones-Evans & Kwong 2010). Such inconsistencies in findings compel researchers to find explanations for such contradictions.

One possible explanation for these inconsistencies could be the motivation students offer for enrolling in an entrepreneurship course. Few studies on the impact of EE examine the role of motivation and in particular, the motivation for enrolling in an entrepreneurship course. Not all students enrolling in an entrepreneurship course would necessarily be enrolling because they plan to start an entrepreneurial venture. It is therefore possible for the impact of EE to be influenced by the motivations of students, specifically the motivation for the choice of EE over another module at university. Educators in EE develop learning material with the intention to enable entrepreneurship students to acquire knowledge, entrepreneurial competencies and skills and to learn more about entrepreneurship (Greene & Saridakis 2008). Students, however, enrol for a course to serve a particular purpose, and it could be possible that the motivations for registering in a course on entrepreneurship were reasons other than increasing their entrepreneurial intention. Should differences in motivation for registration be identified, such differences could form the basis of further analysis of impact studies to determine whether the motivation for enrolling in a course on entrepreneurship could partly explain the contradictory findings. Knowledge of differences in motivation could enable educators to design the curriculum and pedagogy accordingly to maximise the effect of the EE program. Research suggests that students consider various factors that influence the decision to enrol for a particular course (Babad 2001; Babad & Tayeb 2003; Beekhoven, De Jong & Van Hout 2003; Kocak & Sever 2011; Shaaban 2016), and it is possible that these factors, as motivators for enrolment, could influence the degree of engagement and consequently learning that takes place in the entrepreneurship class. This article addresses the following research question: do students have different motivations for enrolling in a course on entrepreneurship?

The following section starts with a review of the current literature on student enrolment, followed by a methods section, a presentation and discussion of the findings and concludes with a summary of the implications of these findings.

Conceptual framework

Pathways theory and rational choice theory are two theories that have been used in previous studies on course enrolment motivations to explain why students choose to register for a course in entrepreneurship. These theories, together with past studies on course enrolment, guide the identification of items that will be measured to determine course enrolment motivation.

Pathways theory

One theory that aims to explain student choice is the pathways theory, which conceptualises that the student's

pathway is influenced by various factors and various choices that the student has to make within the learning environment and context of the course (Robinson & Bornholt 2007). Not used in an educational course selection context previously, Robinson and Bornholt (2007) apply the pathways theory to explain how enrolment at a university or promotion from one level of study to the next, exposes the student to a new culture and possibly a new setting, which is a combination of the course and the people the individual is exposed to. This engagement also influences future enrolment with each stage exposing the student to different classroom experiences and student groups. The pathways theory explains that students respond to these changes as being part of the social context of other students, the culture of the course and the context of the course within the wider university community. If the student makes satisfactory academic performance, and the environment described above provides student satisfaction, these factors are likely to positively influence future choices of enrolment or registration to the next level of such courses. As students progress through their academic careers, both the individual and the cultural context of the student are theorised to change, where the development of the student and choices made by the student are assumed to occur continuously. This implies that as students engage in a constantly changing environment, with different persons and in different circumstances, students 'constantly construct and reconstruct their responses to a constantly changing collective culture' (Robinson & Bornholt 2007). In terms of the pathways theory as proposed by Robinson and Bornholt (2007), the learning context of the student is described as a function of the characteristics of both the course and students.

To the student enrolling for a course in entrepreneurship, the enrolment is part of a complex journey from initial enrolment to graduation that the student undertakes, being exposed to various influences potentially impacting on future choices the student makes along the way. Thus the pathways theory provides insight to the choices students make along this journey. The pathways theory also explains that personal interpretation by students of events they experienced may cause them to make changes to their choices that could include deregistration, temporarily stopping, or transferring to another course. For a business student, the pathway to a chosen degree could therefore include a prescribed course or an elective in entrepreneurship, or the choice of enrolment could be based on the social context the student has been exposed to, where the student perceives that a preferred group of students would also choose to register for a course in entrepreneurship.

Rational choice theory

A second theory that attempts to explain student choices is the rational choice theory, which suggests that individuals make rational choices, where in the case of EE, the choice could be based on a rational desire to pursue an entrepreneurial career or alternately on a cost-benefit analysis, the latter referring to the estimated costs and benefits of studying within the environment the student chooses (Beekhoven et al. 2003).

Accordingly, a student would evaluate the cost of enrolment in terms of time and effort and should the resultant benefit from enrolment be more attractive or rewarding than the cost, the student will pursue the benefit of enrolment.

Other criteria that students sought information on from senior students, was feedback on the toughness on the course in terms of assignments and grading. The researcher also related feedback as part of the student's desire to reduce the perceived risk or cost of pursuing a particular course and stated that if the student perceived the assignment of a course to be too time-consuming, or required 'great many details to tackle', or the ladders of grading were hard or too steep to climb, some students would not bother to enrol for the particular course. Such a decision would be attributed to the many 'functional and psychological risks' perceived to be attached to selecting a particular course (Kocak & Sever 2011).

Career choice

Previous studies on career choice and subsequent student enrolment to pursue that career have examined the role of social interactions and relationships with others, and in a study involving Australian and German teachers education students, it was found that immediate family represented the greatest influence, followed by friends and the wider community, others in the wider community and extended family (Beltman & Wosnitza 2008). In the case of entrepreneurship, an encouraging culture and supportive family environment have been positively associated with an increase in entrepreneurial activity (Nieuwenhuizen & Nieman 2018). In instances where a career choice was not as highly regarded by society, parental support and encouragement were one of the main motivations for the career and subsequent subject choice (Ejeh 2005).

Influential others

In a study looking at students' core selection process from a marketing perspective and where course choice was seen as a product, 'word of mouth' (WOM) proved to be the most trusted factor in course selection and accordingly a most influential consideration by students making their enrolment choices. Word-of-mouth-related evaluations refer to the feedback provided by senior students on their experiences with a particular course. Kocak and Sever (2011) used three focus groups to collect responses from students in the faculty of communication sciences, on aspects they considered when enrolling for a course, the type of information that influenced their decisions that they regarded as valuable and the reasons why these considerations mattered. Senior students were seen as valuable sources of information by junior students to aid them in the choice of course. Information gathered from senior students included in the class performance of the instructor (lecturer), as knowledge of whether an instructor could instruct (or not), was more important for the student to know than the instructor's industrial or intellectual reputation. This finding is not surprising if one shares the expectation that the lecturer has to make a positive

contribution towards the student's understanding of the coursework, which would be reflected in the student's final mark (Kocak & Sever 2011).

Choice by discipline

Quite a few studies report on course choice from the perspective of the discipline the student is pursuing, such as teaching and engineering. In a study conducted among engineering and business students in Pakistan, career prospects seemed to dominate the choice of university and thereafter the choice of course. The reputation of the university as well as interest in the subject were the top two motivating factors for both engineering and business students. The reputation of the course was perceived by engineering students to be the next most important consideration, whereas business students regarded employment prospects as the next most important consideration (Ahmad et al. 2013). Ahmad et al.'s (2013) study found that the return a course provides after investment, expressed as the result of a cost-benefit analysis, seemed to be an important consideration to both business and engineering students. The biggest difference was in course reputation, which did not enjoy the same degree of prominence among business students as it did for engineering students.

Major versus minor courses

A study by Babad (2001) makes a major contribution to understanding the subject choice selection of students at universities and the motivation behind such choices, by distinguishing between first choices and subsequent choices. This study revealed differences in the feedback of the first-year, second-year and third-year students, where certain kinds of selection criteria were progressively replaced by other considerations as predictors of the student's reflection on the course, prompting the authors to conclude that this probably reflected the changing needs of the students. Babad (2001) further looked at the different factors students considered in the selection of the first or most important courses and last selected, also defined as the less important elective courses. Elective courses therefore excluded compulsory courses to which the student was offered no alternate option or choice. This study by Babad found that a major consideration for first-course choices was the perceived prospective intellectual level as well as expected quality of teaching and students' potential learning and occupational gain that could take place in the first-choice course. Last courses or electives, were selected on the basis that they were easier and more comfortable for the student to undertake, thereby demonstrating that academic considerations were more influential in the choice of compulsory of first courses, whereas personal considerations played a bigger role in the selection of last courses, where factors such as personal comfort and relation to the pleasures of college life were perceived to be more important considerations (Babad 2001).

In another paper, Babad and Tayeb (2003) examined the course selection responses of students and the sequence in

which they responded in making their course selection. This study reported that each selection that was made, influenced the considerations and weightings of course characteristics for the next course thus highlighting the changing composition and value attached to the remaining options after the compulsory courses or important courses had been selected. Accordingly, the choice of one course could influence the selection of others depending on the programme composition or considerations of the students. The study also emphasised and confirmed previous findings that there are clear differences between first choices and last choices, with the first referred to important decisions and the latter unimportant choices (Babad & Tayeb 2003:389).

In cases where the selection involves major courses, where the degree of freedom of selection of the student is restricted and certain courses become compulsory, such compulsory courses take precedence in the course selection process, which then impacts on the subsequent choices that the student makes. Some students may prefer to choose courses based on what they perceived to be primary (major) and secondary courses. Following the choice of the major course, subsequent courses will be selected to make up outstanding credits and can be chosen as a result of workload, expected high grades or the manner with which it slots in with their existing timetable (Babad, Darley & Kaplowitz 1999).

These above considerations add greater insight to the decision-making challenges students face when engaging in course selection, where the decision-making process involves a series of successive yet interdependent decisions that the student needs to make from among various course options that comprise the programme that the student will follow to complete a degree. Factors such as timetable clashes and the degree of difficulty and effort a particular course demands impact on the other courses that the student may wish to take and impacts on entrepreneurship enrol as a preferred or secondary selection.

Aim and objectives

The motivation for students choosing to enrol for a specific course is usually not known, and it is possible that the motivation for registrations may differ. Knowledge of these motivations could be useful to educators who wish to influence future enrolment levels as well as the degree of learning that takes place in a module on entrepreneurship. This study aims to identify whether students registered for a business degree exhibit different motivations for enrolling for a course in entrepreneurship and should such differences be found, to identify what the different motivations are.

Research methods and design

By questioning why students choose to enrol in a course on entrepreneurship, this study seeks to determine whether there are different motivations for enrolment that could have an impact on the performance of the student and possibly explain variances in the Impact studies.

Over a 3-year period, students were asked, on entering the entrepreneurship second-year class, to write a note indicating what motivated them to register for the course and what they desired to get from the course. These notes were stored, and eventually the various notes were worked through to determine the factors that the student listed as the motivations for registering in the course on entrepreneurship. Further deliberation between lecturers of entrepreneurship led to the addition of a few more possible motivations for choosing to register for a module in entrepreneurship, resulting in 12 possible motivations.

Prior to commencing this study, institutional ethical clearance had to be obtained and evidence of a consent form requesting the respondent's agreement to participate in the study as well as informing the respondent that the information gathered would remain confidential, that participation was voluntary and exit or withdrawal from participation at any stage was possible without any consequences to the respondent, needed to be produced as part of the ethical clearance application. Ethical clearance was obtained from the Social, Behavioural and Education Research ethics committee at Stellenbosch University under project number 14414.

Second-year business students at Stellenbosch University were invited to participate in the study. Analysis was conducted at the second-year level of a Bachelor of Commerce degree, as this is typically the level at which a module focussing on entrepreneurship is offered for the first time in such a degree.

Purposeful sampling was used, and data were collected by means of a questionnaire that was handed out in the finance as well as entrepreneurship classes, as the researcher had access to these classes. Ethical guidelines pertaining to data collection among the students resulted in only 107 usable responses out of potentially 600 being received. All the respondents in the finance class also chose entrepreneurship in their second year of study. Thirty three students (31% of the respondents) were male, whereas 74 (69%) were female. The ages of the students ranged from a minimum of 19 years of age to a maximum of 24 years of age.

The 12 items suggesting possible motivations for enrolling in a course on entrepreneurship were subjected to a principal component analysis (PCA) using the statistical package SPSS. The PCA was undertaken with the intention of reducing the 12 motivational items into fewer factors. Responses to the 12 items were recorded on a Likert scale from 1 to 7, where 1 indicated strongly disagree and 7 indicated strongly agree and related to the extent to which they agreed with the various statements (see Table 1).

Entrepreneurship education in the context of this study refers to the entrepreneurship course that was developed to teach entrepreneurship to second-year undergraduate business students. The course was delivered through classroom lectures over a full semester. Content included a section on the

TABLE 1: Principal component analysis on enrolment motivation.

Principal Component Analysis - enrolment motivation <i>n</i> = 107	CNV	EINT	CMP	Extraction
My reason for choosing entrepreneurship is because I thought it was going to be an easy course	0.844	-	-	0.761
My main reason for choosing entrepreneurship is because I thought the workload would be less or easier	0.802	-	-	0.717
I registered for this course because it was recommended to me by my friends	0.773	-	-	0.528
I registered for this course because my friends are doing it	0.659	-	-	0.528
I am running my own business and need more information on how to make a success of it	-	0.811	-	0.719
I plan to start my own business and want to gather as much information how to successfully run my business	-	0.746	-	0.685
I am passionate about entrepreneurship and it was one of my preferred choices	-	0.708	-	0.736
I registered for this course as it is a compulsory course	-	-	0.887	0.801
I registered for this course because I wanted the knowledge/skills it offered	-	-	-0.790	0.712
Eigen value	3.433	1.566	1.282	-
% of variance	38.14	17.405	14.243	69.791
Cronbach Alpha	0.804	0.668	-	-
Inter-Item correlation mean	0.511	0.414	-	-
KMO	-	-	-	0.727†

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization. Rotation converged in 4 iterations.

CNV, convenience; EINT, entrepreneurial interest; CMP, compulsory; KMO, Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin.

†, Sig. <.001.

entrepreneurial process, effectuation, with an emphasis on identifying opportunities that lead to the development of a feasibility study to determine whether the chosen idea was feasible and likely to succeed. Assessment took the form of formative and summative assessments, the latter comprising tests and a group project. Delivery took place in the form of lectures, where students were expected to attend lectures and the pedagogical framework included lecturer-led instruction of the learning material, student-focussed learning using case studies and reflective exercises, group collaboration where students were expected to identify an opportunity to apply or implement the taught material and formative and summative assessment of the knowledge acquired and applied.

These responses were then subjected to a PCA, which is a process of identifying patterns in data, and expressing the data in such a way that the similarities and differences in the data are highlighted. Principal component analysis enables one to find patterns in the data and to compress the data by reducing the number of dimensions, without losing much information (Smith 2002). The PCA process starts by examining the suitability of the data for a factors analysis process, after which, Kaiser's criterion is used to determine the number of factors to retain for purposes of analyses. In terms of this technique, only factors with an eigenvalue of 1.0 or more should be retained for further analysis. The eigenvalue of a particular factor indicates how much of the total variance can be explained by that factor (Pallant 2016). The factors were thereafter rotated using the varimax rotation technique, with the intention of reducing the data to clearly

identifiable factors. If an initial round of analysis did not produce suitable results as a result of too many side loadings, the items that had low extraction values on the Communalities table would firstly be removed and the rotation rerun and item reductions made where necessary until a favourable outcome was reached.

Ethical considerations

Ethical clearance to conduct this study was obtained from the University of Stellenbosch, REC: Social, Behavioural and Education Research (SBER), Human Research (Humanities).

Results

The data were subjected to a PCA analysis using varimax rotation, resulting in a final Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy of 0.727 with a significance value <0.001 indicating that the data were suitable for a PCA.

Of the items loaded, varimax rotation yielded three factors with eigenvalues equal to or greater than 1, accounting for 38.14%, 17.405% and 14.243% of the variance, respectively, and cumulatively explaining 69.79% of the variance.

Four items loaded onto the first factor as displayed in Table 1, with the highest factor loading of 0.844 suggesting that this factor relates to convenience (CNV), specifically the ease or difficulty of the course and the fact that friends were pursuing the course as well. The second factor was labelled Entrepreneurial Interest (EINT), as all the items loading onto this factor related to an interest to acquire more knowledge about entrepreneurship. A third factor yielded only two factor loadings of 0.887 and -0.790 respectively. The negative factor loading referred to the item 'I registered for this course because I wanted the knowledge/skills it offered' and the negative value was interpreted to suggest that respondents did not choose the course because of the knowledge or skills they could acquire from the course, but rather, in alignment with the highest factor loading of 0.887, suggested that they had no choice but to register for this course. Often the selection of a particular (major) module dictates which other additional courses become compulsory modules for a particular degree or programme. The last factor was labelled compulsory (CMP) to indicate the compulsory nature of the factor, with all three labels being supported by literature on course selection.

Although only two items loaded on factor 3, their factor loadings were reasonably high at -0.790 and 0.887 respectively.

The reliability of the items loading on factors 1 and 2 were tested for internal consistency, with an acceptably high Cronbach's alpha coefficient recorded for CNV (0.804) and a lower value of 0.668 for EINT, which is not uncommon for a measure with only three items (Pallant 2016).

In this study, all factor side loadings of 0.4 were ignored for purpose of analysis after the final rotation analysis. This is in accordance with Hair et al. (1998:12) who state that in cases

where the sample size is 120, a significant factor loading of 0.5 can be used, and as the sample size increases, the significant factor loading decreases.

Discussion

The first motivational factor identified by this study (CNV) relates to convenience and ease of work. Items included in this factor included 'I thought it was going to be an easy course, that the workload would be less or easier, it was recommended to me by my friends, and because my friends are doing it'. The pathways theory explains that as students engage with different groups in different classes, they are exposed to new influences, cultures and settings that may influence their course selections and similar levels of motivation for various courses (Robinson & Bornholt 2007). These influences include the recommendations and selection friends have made, as expressed by the items describing factor 2 of this study. The pathways theory also offers an explanation where the choice of module is not based on interest in the content of the module and explains that on their pathway towards completing their degree, students engage in activities or courses that may be demanding and time intensive, which influences them to choose a course that is perceived to be not as demanding or time intensive. The students' perception of the course being easier or less demanding aligns with the explanation offered by the pathways theory. The rational choice theory could also be applied as support for the CNV motivation, as it suggests that the chosen combination of courses that students register for could be rational, where a cost benefit analysis is done in terms of the 'cost' of doing a (minor or elective) course in entrepreneurship, in exchange for the benefit of having more time to spend on a major course, where an entrepreneurship module is perceived to be less demanding than other options the student may choose from. Enrolment in a particular course could therefore signal that the course is perceived to be less risky to the student in terms of time and effort required to pass (Kocak & Sever 2011).

The motivation labelled EINT suggests that some students enrolled in an entrepreneurship course because they were interested in an entrepreneurial career (EINT) and wanted to acquire the knowledge and skills associated with an entrepreneurial career (Beekhoven et al. 2003). The rational choice theory explains that students' decision to enrol for a course in entrepreneurship is a rational choice if they wish to pursue an entrepreneurial career and thus supports this finding. Besides getting the knowledge they need to successfully start and manage an entrepreneurial venture, the decision to choose a module in entrepreneurship is seen as a more beneficial module than a module in another course that does not contribute as much to the preferred career choice of the student. Career choices, as a factor that influences enrolment choice, also relate in this study to the EINT motivation factor, as it confirms the commonly accepted motivation that students take a course in entrepreneurship because they have the intention to start and run their own businesses.

This study indicates that the motivators of enrolment are reflective of both academic and personal considerations, where the desire to acquire more knowledge and the compulsory categories are indicative of the academic considerations of the student, whereas cost-benefit factors such as ease of work are more personally motivated considerations (Babad & Tayeb 2003).

The third motivational factor, CMP, is supported by the pathways theory that explains that the choices and course selections a student makes as a student embarks on a preferred pathway impact on the remaining options available to the student. For example, the timeslot within which the student's first-choice course is offered excludes other courses that are offered in the same timeslot where physical attendance is compulsory. Accordingly, the student's options are restricted, and the section of an entrepreneurship course could indicate that there was no other option available to the student, following the student's selection of first-choice courses, which corresponds with the third factor, being compulsory or no choice, as identified in this study. In other cases, a student may choose to register for a particular degree where a module in entrepreneurship is a prescribed part of the degree programme, in which case the student would also indicate that there was no choice other than to pursue the entrepreneurship module, which also coincides with the CMP motivational factor identified in this study. Compulsory courses also featured as motivations for course registration in past studies (Babad et al. 1999). Some courses become compulsory by virtue of the selection of other courses or become compulsory prerequisite courses because of further studies students want to pursue. This implies that course selection is not always chosen voluntarily, or that it is a subject of choice but rather that students often have no choice than to take the course.

Strengths and limitations

A weakness of this study is the small sample size and the fact that the sample is not necessarily representative of the population of entrepreneurship students at tertiary institutions. Although these limitations mean that the findings should be generalised with care, this study does raise an important research question that challenges the current understanding of the impact of an EE intervention and suggests a more rigorous debate on student motivation and expected outcomes.

Conclusion

This study finds that not all students who have enrolled for a course in entrepreneurship have a desire or interest in entrepreneurship. The study examined the motivation students provided for enrolling in an entrepreneurship course and found that three unrelated components explain students' motivation for enrolling in an entrepreneurship course. Entrepreneurship knowledge and skills are either deliberately pursued through course enrolment, or students enrol because they have no other choice than to enrol for the module, or they might have a choice between alternative

modules but choose to enrol in the entrepreneurship module for other benefits such registration holds.

These findings have both theoretical and practical implications and merit further examination.

Theoretical contributions

This study contributes to our understanding of the motivations for enrolling for a course in entrepreneurship. The study identifies three motivational factors that explain student enrolment and suggests possible items and dimensions for measuring course enrolment motivation. This study also contributes to the existing literature on EE impact studies, where motivation for course enrolment can now be added to explain varying outcomes of the impact of EE courses.

This study makes a contribution towards understanding the impact that enrolment motivation makes towards entrepreneurial education. It is theorised that where enrolment motivation differs, the outcome and impact of EE will also differ. The findings of this study should not be confined to classroom education only but should equally be applied to other forms of entrepreneurial education, such as international internships and scholarships, to both local and international students, where each may have a different motive for enrolment in the entrepreneurship course. This study also introduces another measure to impact studies, that could provide greater insight into the performance of students undertaking a course or more in entrepreneurship, namely the role that motivation plays in the decision by students to enrol for a course in entrepreneurship. Determining the motive for enrolling in a course of entrepreneurship is important, as the motivation is likely to have an impact on the outcome of the engagement and accordingly the likelihood of achieving a desired educational outcome.

This study identifies that some students are not enrolled in entrepreneurship for the purpose of acquiring entrepreneurial knowledge that they could utilise in the future, and this finding could help explain apathy in class attendance and the manner in which students engage with the coursework. Educators have to think of innovative ways to engage students to a greater extent so that students realise the value of the education that they are exposed to.

Practical implication

This study indicates that not all students who are enrolled in an entrepreneurship course have done so out of choice. However, the teacher of the entrepreneurship course is afforded the opportunity to impart knowledge to all students registered for the course. The pedagogy, class cases, assessment method and even the curriculum can be so designed to make the experience as rewarding as possible. At a time where change and creative destruction force firms to reflect on their existence, their relevance and ability to adapt to changes in technology, consumer and environmental needs, entrepreneurial behaviour are of paramount importance for

the survival of the firm. Entrepreneurial education affords lecturers the opportunity to develop entrepreneurial skills and competencies in a deliberate, focussed manner; hence the entrepreneurship module's curriculum must be so designed that it addresses the competencies and skills needed in an entrepreneurial organisation. Entrepreneurship education should equip the individual to see opportunities and be able to identify ways of exploiting the opportunities should they so desire, both as entrepreneurs and as individuals within firms that could exploit opportunities and acquire a sustainable competitive advantage.

This study has implications for developers of entrepreneurial education material and courses, who should develop material to ensure greater engagement with the entrepreneurial material and accordingly enhance the learning experience. It alerts educators of the need to determine the expectations of students and to align those expectations with the planned entrepreneurship module outcomes and in so doing address misconceptions students might have about the course.

A decrease in student enrolment could have an impact on departmental budgets and in extreme cases, the financial viability of a course offering. This study alerts educators of factors that could impact on future enrolment and increased interest on an entrepreneurship module or programme.

Suggestions for further research

The conflicting results in impact studies justify further research to be conducted to explain why studies are producing such conflicting results. A further problem to the academic dealing with these mixed outcomes, is: Who are we serving, why are they attending a course in entrepreneurship, and what outcomes do they desire? Research to provide a greater understanding of these aspects could shed light on the inconsistent findings reported in impact studies.

Future studies can explore the influence of class size, module content, teaching style, assessment and the role of the family that were not included in the list of items measured in this study (Brown, Varley & Pal 2009).

Acknowledgements

Competing interests

The author declared that they have no financial or personal relationship(s) that may have inappropriately influenced them in writing this article.

Author's contributions

A.C.N. is the sole author of this article.

Funding information

The author discloses receipt of the following financial support for the publication of this article: This work was supported by the research council of Norway through the INTPART project.

Data availability

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author, A.C.N., upon reasonable request.

Disclaimer

The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and are the product of professional research. It does not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of any affiliated institution, funder, agency, or that of the publisher. The author is responsible for this article's results, findings, and content.

References

- Ahmad, W., Sabir, I., Ashraf, R.U. & Ahmad, N., 2013, 'Factors affecting university and course choice: A comparison of undergraduate engineering and business students in Central Punjab, Pakistan', *Journal of Basic and Applied Scientific Research* 3(10), 298–305.
- Babad, E., 2001, 'Students' course selection: Differential considerations for first and last course', *Research in Higher Education* 42(4), 469–492. <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1011058926613>
- Babad, E., Darley, J.M. & Kaplowitz, H., 1999, 'Developmental aspects in students' course selection', *Journal of Educational Psychology* 91(1), 157–168. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-0663.91.1.157>
- Babad, E. & Tayeb, A., 2003, 'Experimental analysis of students' course selection', *British Journal of Educational Psychology* 73(3), 373–393. <https://doi.org/10.1348/000709903322275894>
- Beekhoven, S., De Jong, U. & Van Hout, H., 2003, 'Different courses, different students, same results? An examination of differences in study progress of students in different courses', *Higher Education* 46(1), 37–59. <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1024414529666>
- Beltman, S. & Wosnitza, M., 2008, "'You are getting too old, find a man and marry": Social aspects of motivation to choose teacher education', *Australian Journal of Educational and Developmental Psychology* 8, 49–63.
- Brown, C., Varley, P. & Pal, J., 2009, 'University course selection and services marketing', *Marketing Intelligence & Planning* 27(3), 310–325. <https://doi.org/10.1108/02634500910955227>
- Dickson, P.H., Solomon, G.T. & Weaver, K.M., 2008, 'Entrepreneurial selection and success: does education matter?', *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development* 15(2), 239–258. <https://doi.org/10.1108/14626000810871655>
- Ejeh, M.U., 2005, 'Students' reasons for entering Nigerian primary teacher education and their career plans', *Research in Education* 74(1), 36–46. <https://doi.org/10.7227/RIE.74.4>
- Fayolle, A., 2013, 'Personal views on the future of entrepreneurship education', *Entrepreneurship and Regional Development* 25(7–8), 692–701. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08985626.2013.821318>
- Gamede, B.T. & Uleanya, C., 2019, 'Impact of entrepreneurship education on business organisations', *Journal of Entrepreneurship Education* 22(2), 1–11.
- Greene, F.J. & Saridakis, G., 2008, 'The role of higher education skills and support in graduate self-employment', *Studies in Higher Education* 33(6), 653–672. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03075070802457082>
- Hair, J.F., Anderson, R.E., Tatham, R.L. & Black, W.C., 1998, *Multivariate data analysis*, 5th edn., Prentice Hall, New Jersey.
- Katz, J.A., 2003, 'The chronology and intellectual trajectory of American entrepreneurship education: 1876–1999', *Journal of Business Venturing* 18(2), 283–300. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0883-9026\(02\)00098-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0883-9026(02)00098-8)
- Kocak, G.N. & Sever, N.S., 2011, 'Should I take it or should I not? Exploration of students' course choice as a product', *International Review of Management and Marketing* 1(1), 1–7.
- Kuratko, D.F., 2005, 'The emergence of entrepreneurship education: development, trends and challenges', *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice* 29(5), 577–598. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-6520.2005.00099.x>
- Martin, B.C., McNally, J.J. & Kay, M.J. 2013, 'Examining the formation of human capital in entrepreneurship: A meta-analysis of entrepreneurship education outcomes', *Journal of Business Venturing* 28(2), 211–224. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusvent.2012.03.002>
- Nabi, G., Liñán, F., Fayolle, A., Krueger, N. & Walmsley, A., 2017, 'The impact of entrepreneurship education in higher education: A systematic review and research agenda', *Academy of Management Learning and Education* 16(2), 277–299. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amle.2015.0026>
- Nieuwenhuizen, C. & Nieman, G. (eds.), 2018, *Entrepreneurship: A South African Perspective*, 4th edn., Van Schaik Publishers, Pretoria.
- Omotosho, A.O., Gamede, B.T. & Uleanya, C., 2020, 'Effect of entrepreneurship education on entrepreneurial intentions of rural-based university students in South Africa', *Afrika* 10(2), 83–104. <https://doi.org/10.31920/2634-3649/2020/10n2a4>
- Pallant, J., 2016, *SPSS survival manual*, 6th edn., McGraw-Hill Education, Maidenhead.
- Robinson, R.A. & Bornholt, L.J., 2007, 'Pathways theory of progression through higher education', *Australian Journal of Educational and Developmental Psychology* 7, 49–62.
- Smith, L.I., 2002, *A tutorial on principal components analysis*, viewed 25 September 2022, from <https://ourarchive.otago.ac.nz/bitstream/handle/10523/7534/OUCS-2002-12.pdf>
- Shaaban, K., 2016, 'Investigating the reasons for choosing a major among the engineering students in Qatar', in *IEEE Global Engineering Education Conference, (EDUCON)*, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, pp. 57–61. <https://doi.org/10.1109/EDUCON.2016.7474531>
- STATSSA 2022, *Quarterly Labour Force Survey: Q1: 2022*, viewed 10 October 2022, from <https://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/P0211/Presentation%20QLFS%20Q1%202022.pdf>
- Thompson, P., Jones-Evans, D. & Kwong, C.C.Y., 2010, 'Education and entrepreneurial activity: A comparison of White and South Asian Men', *International Small Business Journal* 28(2), 147–162. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0266242609355858>
- Yu, K.W., Mincieli, L. & Zipsper, N., 2021, 'How student evaluations of teaching affect course enrolment', *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education* 46(5), 779–792. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02602938.2020.1808593>