# University Learning Environment and Entrepreneurship Intentions among Business Students in Public Universities in Kenya

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#### Abstract

Kenya has had a considerably high rate of unemployment among young universities graduates. This is despite the continued government's efforts to develop and promote entrepreneurship culture among graduates as a strategy to deal with the unemployment problem by changing their minds to venture into business than seeking formal jobs upon graduation.. The universities provide a conducive learning environment that motivates students to develop entrepreneurial intention before and after graduation. However University graduates continue to wander around in search of formal jobs despite the entrepreneurial training that they went through in the universities. Three theories were used to address the influence of University learning environment on entrepreneurship intentions among business students in public universities in Kenya. Descriptive research design was used to establish the relationship between university learning environment and entrepreneurship intentions among business students in public universities in Kenya.. Attitude acted as a mediating variable while capital availability was a moderating variable. Three hypotheses were developed on university learning environment, attitude and availability of capital to test entrepreneurial intentions among the university business students.. A sample size of 354 final year undergraduate business students out of 3037 targeted population were randomly selected to fill in the questionnaires. A preliminary survey questionnaire was developed and pre-tested with two randomly selected universities to validate the variables and to ascertain if the questions were in sync with the expected responses. Final questionnaire was prepared and copies were randomly distributed to final year business students in the public universities through face to face or drop off and pick up method. The data collected was edited coded and analyzed through SPSS computer software. Regression analysis done revealed that there is a positive but insignificant relationship between university learning environment and entrepreneurial intentions among business students in public universities in Kenya. The results further underscored the influence of attitude as a mediating variable in creation of entrepreneurship intentions amongst students. The study also found that availability of capital as a moderating variable had a significant impact in the development of entrepreneurship intentions as well as underscoring the need of providing a link between the young graduates and potential capital providers. The study concluded that university learning environment has little or no significant effect on the relationship between entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurship intentions among business students in public universities in Kenya. It recommends a university learning environment that promotes entrepreneurial culture among students.

KEY WORDS; University learning environment, Entrepreneurial intentions, Attitude and capital availability

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## I. Introduction

Entrepreneurship is viewed as an important driver for economic growth, productivity, social development and hence is perhaps one of the main issues in current public policy debate (Denanyoh, Adjei, & Nyemekye, 2015). It produces new demands by successfully arousing the need of the society and the desire for better products or services. Schumpeter's (1934) "creative destruction" demonstrates the phenomenon of entrepreneurship as some new insight, product and process that change the existing business approaches. Entrepreneurship has been considered as an engine growth for economic development in the developed, emerging, and developing economies. In the world over, university and college graduates are now finding it difficult to secure formal employment in both public and private enterprises due to the current volatile economic environment hence the need to focus on entrepreneurship as a gateway to employment creation and stabilizing economies (Rudhumbu, Svotwa, Munyanyiwa, & Mutsau, 2016). This has of late conquered the cardinal theme of academics and governmental policy makers' interest(Ojewumi & Fagbenro, 2019).

Entrepreneurial behavior can be influenced as a result of circumstantial reasons, personal interest, and environmental factors which deem it necessary for a person to be self-employed. For the last few decades,

entrepreneurship has become an important economic and social topic as well as a well-known research topic in the world(Alain & Gailly, 2013). Fostering an entrepreneurial culture among the university graduates has therefore become an issue of great priority such that developing an opportunity-oriented mindset in university students is now considered very critical (Gerba, 2012). Again, the role of the university in the development of entrepreneurship has received much attention with regard to research into the relationship between enterprise culture and university education. Considerable efforts have been made to incorporate the development of entrepreneurship and awareness of business creation into university curricula, adding to and, later, developing the concept of the entrepreneurial university(Fenton & Barry, 2011). Given this scenario, university students are currently perceived as one of the groups most likely to start an entrepreneurial project. It is in this context that, in recent years, several studies on the entrepreneurial intentions of university students have been carried out (Nieves, Déniz, & Osorio, 2014).

For two or so decades many universities have been offering entrepreneurship courses and programs at both the undergraduate and postgraduate levels and some of them even provide an infrastructure for students to start their own businesses while studying. The Government of Kenya and other relevant agencies believe that universities can effectively create an entrepreneurial climate to stimulate enterprise awareness and access potential entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurship education is one of the fastest growing fields of education globally, yet the areas of what should be taught in these programmes and how to teach them have been mentioned by many researchers as ones that lack both consensus and devoted attention. There is need to provide a detailed map of common and best practices in terms of curriculum content and methods of teaching entrepreneurship on the tertiary level, and to explore how they correlate with practices recommended by the entrepreneurial learning field of research, in order to contribute to extracting best practice (Sirelkhatim & Gangi, 2015).

Therefore, entrepreneurship coupled with technology, creativity and innovation is considered to have the impetus required to sustain the economic growth. Both entrepreneurship and innovation are highly related to creating something new and policies dealing with economic dynamism always emphasize these two concepts.

. Entrepreneurial education needs to be based on practical actions by learners where they work in teams creating value for others. It needs to allow for creativity where learners get to try out their own ideas, apply their acquired knowledge and find new solutions. It needs to be connected to the environment outside the school or university, interacting with and learning from society's cultures, markets and professional actors. Finally it also needs to relate to attitudinal aspects such as belief in own ability, ambiguity tolerance and risk of failure. These basic dimensions are stated to be useful for teachers on all levels developing new educational content, new educational processes and new forms of assessments and exams(Lackéus, 2018)

Moreover, the role of universities in fostering entrepreneurship intentions among students in India, Malaysia, and Singapore was researched (Trivedi, 2016) and the study findings showed that the university's environment and support has significant positive relation with perceived behavioral control. However, the study findings showed no significant relation between the university's environment and support, and attributes towards behavior.

## II. Statement Of The Problem

Kenya has had a considerably high rate of unemployment among young universities graduates. This is despite the continued government's efforts to develop and promote entrepreneurship culture among graduates as a strategy to deal with the unemployment problem by changing their minds to venture into business than seeking formal jobs upon graduation. Entrepreneurial behavior can be influenced as a result of circumstantial reasons, personal interest, and environmental factors which deem it necessary for a person to be self-employed. The universities strive to provide a conducive learning environment that motivates students to develop entrepreneurial intention before and after graduation.

University's environment has an indirect but significant impact on shaping entrepreneurship intentions among students but only through the relationship with perceived behavioral control, (García-Rodríguez, Gutiérrez-Taño, & Ruiz-Rosa, 2017). In Kenya, just like many other Nations, University graduates continue to move from office to another in search of formal jobs despite the entrepreneurship training that they went through in the universities

Students' attitude towards starting their own businesses in Kenya has for long been negative and hence need to re-examine entrepreneurship education programmes and assess their effectiveness in providing a long term solution to the problem of job creation and poverty eradication in Kenya.

Universities' learning environment and support system also play an important role in motivating students to consider pursuing an entrepreneurial career after graduation (Carlos Bazan, 2019). This has been done through development of out of class programmes such as entrepreneurship clubs, seminars and workshops where outstanding entrepreneurship performance is recognized and even rewarded.

Close to four decades now, and in recognition of Kenya's unemployment and underemployment challenges, successive government administrations have prioritized employment creation as a core policy. In

recent times, graduates' preference for being paid employees over becoming self-employed through own startups is one of the major contributing factors to the current unemployment problem (Spencer, Zanna, & Fong, 2006). Until the mid-eighties, Kenyan university graduates were assured of employment in the civil service. Starting of micro and small businesses has been for a long time primarily the preserve of non-college graduates or school dropouts.

#### Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study was to establish the relationship between university learning environment and entrepreneurship intentions among business students in public universities students in Kenya

## III. Literature Review

The theory of planned behavior explains the relationship between the Attitudes and intentions as applied in this study., The theory is instrumental in understanding how attitude can influence behavior and makes it easier to associate the attitude factors with indented behavior. It again explains behaviors over which people have the ability to exert self-control. The key component to this model is behavioral intent; behavioral intentions are influenced by the attitude about the likelihood that the behavior will have the expected outcome and the subjective evaluation of the risks and benefits of that outcome. It is instrumental for building of relevant curriculum for students and provision of an enabling environment for entrepreneurship education. It also helps in change of attitude through observation and experimenting.

The experiential learning theory (Kolb & Kolb, 2007) draws on the work of prominent 20<sup>th</sup> century scholars who gave experience a central role in their theories of human learning and development. It is an important theory that supports learning by doing or experience as a pedagogical tool in education as well as contributing highly on changing attitude of learners through practical experiences. It proposes a dynamic view of learning based on a learning cycle driven by the resolution of the dual dialectics of action/reflection and experience/abstraction. It is an holistic theory that defines learning as the major process of human adaptation involving the whole person. As such, thebtheory is applicable not only in the formal education classroom but in all areas of life. The process of learning from experience is ubiquitous, present in human activity everywhere all the time. The holistic nature of the learning process means that it operates at all levels of human society, from the individual, to the group, to organizations and to society as a whole.

Social cognitive theory is a learning theory based on the idea that people learn by observing others. These learned behaviors can be central to one's personality. While social psychologists agree that the environment one grows up in contributes to behavior, the individual person (and therefore cognition) is just as important. People learn by observing others, with the environment, behavior, and cognition all as the chief factors in influencing development in a reciprocal triadic relationship. For example, each behavior witnessed can change a person's way of thinking (cognition). Similarly, the environment one is raised in may influence later behaviors, just as a father's mindset (also cognition) determines the environment in which his children are raised. The conceptual roots for social cognitive theory come from their book theorizing that all animals' action is based on fulfilling the psychological needs of "feeling, emotion, and desire". The most notable component of this theory is its prediction that a person cannot learn to imitate until they are imitated (Holt & Brown, 1931)

The Social Learning theory establishes that the environment causes behavior, but behavior also causes the environment(Bandura, 1986). Bandura calls this concept reciprocal determinism, where the world and the behavior of persons are mutually caused. He believes that human conduct must be explained in terms of the reciprocal interaction between cognitive, behavioral, and environmental determinants. The social cognitive theory of Bandura (SCT) centers on the concepts of reinforcement and observation, giving more importance to the mental internal processes as well as to the interaction of the subject with others. The SCT postulates that observation and imitation is given across models that can be parents, educators, and friends, and can even be heroes taken from television. The only requirement for learning can be that one person observes another individual, or models behavior to carry out a certain conduct. The observation and imitation intervene upon the cognitive factors and help the subject decide whether or not the observed behavior is to be imitated.

According to Bandura, individuals possess an auto-system that allows them to measure the control on their own thoughts, feelings, motivations and actions. This system exercises self-regulation to enable individuals with aptitude to influence their own cognitive processes and actions and in this way to alter their environment. If we applied the concepts I have just discussed to entrepreneurship education programs, we can infer that the student's observation and interaction with previous entrepreneurs can reinforce entrepreneurial behavior. The observation and imitation of former entrepreneurs will intervene upon the cognitive factors of the students and can help them or alumni to decide if the observed behaviors should be imitated or not. SCT can be helpful to the entrepreneurial behavior field, but educators (career counselors) need to apply this theory to the curriculum (workshops, extracurricular activities) and to students' interactions.

#### **Empirical literature**

Universities can be conceptualized as societal innovation systems and when entrepreneurship education is entrenched in such systems, could be regarded not only as institutions of producing entrepreneurially oriented competent individuals, but also reproducing the social mechanisms that underpin and facilitate the birth and growth of businesses (Sarri, Bakouros, & Petridou, 2010).

Recently a study conducted by (Bazan, et al., 2019) on Effect of University's Environment and Support System in Shaping Entrepreneurial Intention of Students, indicated that, students have a positive perception on the university's ability to influence their intention to start a new ventures Going by the model design used the university's environmental support systems does not influence entrepreneurial intentions directly but rather through the more proximal antecedents such as attitude towards behavior and perceived behavioral control. It further suggest that students' perception of this university support is not directly relevant to their intent to start a new business (Liñán & Alain, 2015)n The results of this research also suggested that the opinions of famous role models positively influence students' attitude towards behavior and perceived behavioral control for starting of new business ventures. According to the analysis, students' attitudes towards entrepreneurship seems to be the concept that is most influenced by role models (reference people). In a broad manner, this seems to make sense because the opinion of others could enhance students' point of view towards entrepreneurship. As a result, it could enhance their perceived capacity peripherally (for instance financial support, mentoring).to the level in which these role models can contribute to the student's ability to start a new business venture.

Nevertheless, the study could not find any significant linkage between entrepreneurship support programs and self-employment intentions. It was described and empirically tested the comprehensive model of the entrepreneurship intentions of students in Turkey(Harun, 2013). In the study, Harun included some environmental factors related to the university. He argued that a supportive environment for entrepreneurship in the university should correlate positively to the entrepreneurship intentions of students. This implied that a supportive, informative and entrepreneurially driven university environment has the ability to strengthen entrepreneurship intentions. Findings of that study suggest that the university environment does not have any significant effect on the entrepreneurship intentions of students.

The role that the university's environment plays in the entrepreneurship intentions of young people in a peripheral and less innovative region in Spain was investigated(García-Rodríguez, Gutiérrez-Taño, & Ruiz-Rosa, 2017). The findings of their research showed that the university's environment directly influenced attitude, self-confidence and motivation, and indirectly and moderately influenced the entrepreneurship intentions of students. In a research on the effect of the university's environment on the entrepreneurship intentions of students in Chile and Colombia(Soria, Honores-Marin, Gutiérrez-Zepeda, & Rodriguez, 2017). Their results showed that the university's environment affects the entrepreneurship intentions of students through attributes towards behavior. Another study was conducted to check whether the perception that the university favors and supports entrepreneurship affects the relationship between cognitive antecedents of intentions that is attitudes, norms and control) and the entrepreneurship intentions of students in Italy(Tognazzo, Gianecchini, & Gubitta, 2017). Their study findings indicated that the feeling that the university is practically helping students to develop favorable conditions for becoming an entrepreneur is not directly relevant for fostering entrepreneurship intentions. Surprisingly, the perception of the university climate as one factor or variable that favored entrepreneurship directly has a weak positive impact on entrepreneurship intentions.

## IV. Methodology

The study used descriptive research design to establish the relationship between University learning environment and entrepreneurship intentions among business students in public universities in Kenya. Primary data that was collected by use of both closed and open ended questionnaires targeting final year Business students from all public universities in Kenya whom are considered as nascent entrepreneurs. Data was analyzed using SPSS version 20 and presented through descriptive and inferential statistics

## Response rate

The study targeted 3037 final year Business students from 29 public universities in Kenya with final-year business undergraduate students in 2017 out of which a sample of 354 respondents were randomly selected and questionnaires issued to them. The study received back a total of 281 responses out of a target population of 354 respondents. This represented 79% response rate which was considered very good for analysis as stated by (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2012)that response rate of 50% is adequate for analysis. Moreover, (Dixon, 2012), also states that a response rate of 50% is adequate while a response rate greater than 70% is very good.

## **Data Reliability Assessment**

The researcher sought to assess the reliability of the data collected to measure the various variables in the study. The purpose of reliability assessment was to ascertain the internal consistency of the data collected by the research questionnaires. To measure this, Cronbach Alpha index was computed to assess the reliability of the data collected. Cronbach Alpha index value greater than 0.7 is regarded as satisfactory for reliability assessment (George &Mallery, 2003),

**Cronbach Alpha for Reliability Assessments** 

Variables	Number of items	Cronbach Alpha index2
University Learning Environment	13	0.882
Attitude	12	0.830
Capital Availability	9	0.803
Entrepreneurship intentions	12	0.785

#### Research Data, (2019)

#### Respondents' characteristics

According to the demographic characteristics of the respondents, majority of the respondents (52.3%) were male while female accounted for 47.7%. This gender distribution implied that there is slightly more male studying in the public universities compared to female, an indication of equal opportunities of obtaining higher education standards. In addition, majority of the respondents (49.8%) were within the age category of 22 to 30 years. This means that most of students in public universities are within the mature age group that can understand the importance of being in an institution of higher learning. The findings further showed that most respondents' mode of study was full time to the extent of 84.0%. Those in part time and Digital (which included distant learning) accounted for 15.7% and 0.4% respectively

Effects of University learning environment on entrepreneurship intentions

University learning environment	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
We all talk about entrepreneurship in the University.	281	2.9680	1.16299
We have common compulsory entrepreneurship courses for all students			
	281	3.1993	1.38724
Policies in the university promote entrepreneurship education	281	2.8790	1.17091
My University has adequate facilities to promote the entrepreneurship activities for students.	281	2.4128	1.20729
The university environment inspires students to develop innovative ideas for			
new business venture	281	2.5801	1.19291
In the university, good business ideas are shared	281	2.8577	1.25969
The University collaborates with entrepreneurs to secure students attachment	281	2.5801	1.32348
and internship  My university recognizes outstanding entrepreneurial capabilities among	281	2.3701	1.15188
students	201	2.3701	1.13100
Best performing students are well rewarded	281	2.3559	1.35543
The university has adequate rooms for students learning	281	2.7402	1.28179
	201	2.2520	4.00004
There are enough vehicles to take students for benchmarking whenever desired	281	2.3630	1.28031
The university library is well equipped with current learning materials	281	2.7224	1.35798
The university notary is well equipped with current learning materials	201	2.7224	1.55770
Overall average	281	2.0914	.64540

The results show that the aspect of we have common compulsory entrepreneurship courses for all students scored the highest mean of 3.1993 (Std. deviation 1.38724).. The study further revealed that the aspect of best performing students are well rewarded scored the least mean of 2.3559 (Std Deviation 1.35543). This shows that students who perform wellin entrepreneurship are not recognized for their efforts in the public universities in Kenya. From these findings majority of the respondents agreed that there is some effect(though not significant) of university learning environment on entrepreneurial intentions among business students in public universities in Kenya.

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## **Testing of Hypothesis**

The hypothesis was 'There is a significant relationship between university learning environment and entrepreneurship intentions among business students in public universities in Kenya'

## University learning environment Model Summary and coefficients

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.115 <sup>a</sup>	.013	.010	.68387

Model		Unstandardiz	ed Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		В	Std. Error	Beta		
	(Constant)	3.855	.139		27.821	.000
1	X1	.122	.063	.115	1.927	.055

a. Dependent Variable: Y

This hypothesis intended to test whether there is a significant relationship between university learning environment and entrepreneurial intentions among students in public universities in Kenya. The hypothesis H01:  $\beta 1 \neq 0$  versus H1:  $\beta 1 = 0$  was tested. Results from the bivariate correlation showed a positive but insignificant relationship between university learning environment and entrepreneurial intentions among public university business students in Kenya (r = .115\*\*, P = .055). The result  $\beta$ 3=.115, P = .055 leads to the rejection of the null hypothesis (H03) and the acceptance of alternative hypothesis. The study, therefore, concluded that there is no significant relationship between university learning environment and entrepreneurial intentions among students' public universities in Kenya This findings are in contrast with that of (Moraes, Iizuka, & Pedro, 2018) who in their study on effects of Entrepreneurial characteristics and University Environment on entrepreneurial intentionfound out that, entrepreneurial intention is positively influenced by self-efficacy, risk-taking, and university environment. This supports similar findings by (Liñán & Alain, 2015). These results also support the findings of (Bazan, et al., 2019) who posit that the university learning does not influence entrepreneurial intentions directly but rather through the more proximal antecedents such as attitude towards behavior and perceived behavioral control. Similar study by (Trivedi, 2016) through the data analysis found out that students' perception of university learning environment is not directly relevant to the students intent to start a new business .The finding of this study further failed to support that of (Uddin & Bose, 2012)which found out that university environment as significantly related to entrepreneurial intention in students.

According to the findings of (Bazan, et al., 2019), students' attitudes towards entrepreneurship seems to be influenced more by role models (reference people) than the university environment. In other words, rather than university learning environment, role modelling and eco-social support could enhance learners perceived capacity peripherally (for instance financial support, mentoring).to the level in which it can contribute to the student's ability to start a new business venture.

In the same breath, (Harun, 2013) in his study indicated that a learning environment for entrepreneurship in the university could correlate positively to the entrepreneurship intentions of students, if it was supportive, informative and entrepreneurially driven and had the ability to strengthen entrepreneurship intentions. Findings of that study suggest that the university environment does not have any significant effect on the entrepreneurship intentions of students.

In contrast (Mustafa, Hernandez, Mahon, & Chee, 2016) in his study to find out whether the university's learning environment (education support, concept development support, and business development support) affects the entrepreneurship intentions of students found that concept development support had a significant impact on their entrepreneurship intentions. Research findings by (Gelaidan & Aliyu, 2017) who analyzed the impact of university educational supports on the entrepreneurship intentions of students found out that such support significantly influenced the entrepreneurship intentions of business students. (Bettinazzi & Zollo, 2017) Who investigated how contextual factors affecting entrepreneurial universities' ability to influence entrepreneurship and the entrepreneurship intentions of students found out that university's learning environment significantly influenced their entrepreneurial attitude and intent.

In his study showed (Trivedi, 2016) that the university's learning environment has an indirect but significant impact on shaping entrepreneurship intentions among students but only through the relationship with perceived behavioral control. (García-Rodríguez, Gutiérrez-Taño, & Ruiz-Rosa, 2017) Also found out that university's environment plays a significant role in influencing the entrepreneurship intentions of young people.

## **Mediating effect of Attitude**

The term mediation refers to a hypothesized causal chain in which one variable affects a second variable that, in turn, affects a third variable. The intervening variable, M, is the mediator. It mediates the relationship between a predictor, X, and an outcome Y.

# Attitude and the relationship between University learning environment and entrepreneurship intentions.

R-sq	MSE	$\mathbf{F}$	df1	df2	P
.4485	.2623	113.0515	2.0000	278.0000	.0000
Coefficient	se	t	р	LLCI	ULCI
1.2694	.2031	6.2508	.0000	.8696	1.6691
.0183	.0479	.3813	.7033	0761	.1126
.7146	.0482	14.8148	.0000	.6196	.8095
	.4485 Coefficient 1.2694 .0183	.4485 .2623  Coefficient se 1.2694 .2031 .0183 .0479	.4485     .2623     113.0515       Coefficient     se     t       1.2694     .2031     6.2508       .0183     .0479     .3813	.4485         .2623         113.0515         2.0000           Coefficient         se         t         p           1.2694         .2031         6.2508         .0000           .0183         .0479         .3813         .7033	.4485         .2623         113.0515         2.0000         278.0000           Coefficient         se         t         p         LLCI           1.2694         .2031         6.2508         .0000         .8696           .0183         .0479         .3813         .7033        0761

E	ffect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI	
M	.1038	.0475	.0155	.2029	

The study carried out mediation test and the result showed that the relationship between university learning environment and intention is 66.97% (R=0.6697). The result further indicated that P-value is more than 0.05 implying that there is no significant relationship between university learning environment and intention. In addition the result indicated that there is significant (p<0.05) relationship between attitude and intention among university entrepreneurship students in Kenya implying that mediation is possible. The result showed that when both university learning environment and attitude are regressed, university learning environment becomes insignificant while mediation remains significant implying that, full mediation has occurred. Regarding indirect effect of university learning environment on entrepreneurship intentions (Y) the result indicated that the effect of attitude (M) is 0.1038 and is significantly greater than zero implying that the mediation effect is significant.

## Moderating effect of capital availability

The study found out that availability of capital, as a moderating variable; do significantly improve the relationship between entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurial intentions among public university students in Kenya.

## V. Conclusion

University learning environment has been found not to play a insignificant role in creation of entrepreneurial intention among students in public universities. However the university environment can significantly play a role in changing the students' attitude towards entrepreneurship. There is much that the university administration can do in changing students' mindset and cultivating entrepreneurship culture among them. University administration can has a role to play in providing a learning atmosphere that motivates students towards self-employment throughopportunity identification, business creation and innovativeness.

## VI. Recommendation

The study also recommends invitation of the successful entrepreneurs in the community to motivate students through presentations. The inherent and urgent need to re-design our university curriculum and content of the entrepreneurship programs offered in the public universities cannot be overemphasized.

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