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## Challenges of Combining Roles as an Educator and Entrepreneur: A Reflective Experience on Professional Development

### Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to analyse the experience and challenges faced by female in multi-tasking, combining full-time academic work with being an entrepreneur; the impact on professional practice and personal development. Becoming an entrepreneur can be a challenging and daunting task, but it can also come with good experience in managing own small businesses and putting theory into practice in teaching students. The work draws on experiences of how entrepreneurs were able to combine academic work with managing their own small businesses and challenges confronted in realities. Drawing from experience, moving back and forth between the academic and business spheres, this paper considers the impact of being an entrepreneur and lecturer, and what it meant for the students, institutions and own professional development. The work uses qualitative and quantitative research paradigms to seek the perceptions of some professionals who were able to combine academic work and being an entrepreneur, challenges faced in the combined roles on their students, institution and professional development. The analysis of findings from few concludes that there are many benefits, as well as challenges, confronting professionals in multi-tasking of being a business owner and academic Lecturer, of which, most of them became very successful through hard work and determination and some failed to cope due to combination of two ultimately complementary roles. This presents further areas for research to investigate why some professionals who try to combine job roles of academic and being a business owner fail and if this may be the case for the male teachers.

Keywords: educator, entrepreneur, professional development, female

### Introduction

The journey of combining job roles as a female academic professional and an entrepreneur is worth reflecting. The journey to a career aspiration is all about determination and how to juggle the roles. As stated in *Determine to succeed* by Achinewhu-Nworgu (2014, p. 1), there have been more opportunities available to individuals to progress in education, to make a good career for themselves and to enjoy a fulfilling family and personal life. These opportunities must be explored and utilised in one way or the other. However, in every available opportunity, there are challenges that come with it. We truly live in an age of opportunity but successfully realising one's aspirations is never easy (Achinewhu-Nworgu, 2014, p. 1). The ambition to combine job roles of being in academy and also a business owner can confront us with challenges and benefits. The experience of being an entrepreneur and a lecturer is worth sharing to encourage the women with this ambitious career or wanting to be in it to realise that the journey is worth pursuing but, it comes with

challenges and hurdles that can put a barrier to success. The most important is the ambition and determination to persevere in any business that interests you in developing a career. The paper will present a contextual analysis of the meaning of entrepreneurship, factors that present challenges and benefits in relation to female perceptions of their personal experiences in multi-role as entrepreneur and Teacher.

## Context

There are some good ample body of literature that explored various definitions and reasons why people choose to become an entrepreneur, however, most of the literature have not specifically examined why some professionals in education combine full time jobs and also being a business owner, benefits and challenges faced in the combined roles. To address the issue of entrepreneurship, it is important to first, examine some of the definitions provided in the literature of which Cooper and Dundleberg (1987) defined entrepreneur as a person who either own or manage a business. According to Knight (1921), an entrepreneur is considered as a bearer for risks and uncertainties in making business choices, and make innovations for new goods, new methods of production, new markets, and new types of industrial organization. McClelland (1961) confirms an entrepreneur as a business manager who has the responsibility as a decision maker and takes responsibility for the decision made in the business. Others have described entrepreneurship as a career of the students in business start-up for a career development. Schumpeter (1934) stated that entrepreneur has long history of being recognised as important economic sector to local, regional and national levels. In addition, some people decide to work for themselves because of the poor treatment and poor relationship with employers or line manager, the choice of becoming own boss becomes a priority, particularly for those who may not be in good terms with colleagues or line managers may choose to work for themselves for respect deserved. Along the road, may decide to be in partnership, associates or even clients (ibid). The choice of entrepreneurship is about whom you are and what you really want to prove to the world around you, maybe to become a millionaire, to develop own skill and target in business or to own your business. To some, it could be because of being the main bread winner of the family, hence the choice to have own business for steady income, work at own time and pace, particularly in a situation of high unemployment, the fear of being unemployed therefore, becoming an entrepreneur gives you some job security.

The economic development of any nation solely relies upon both men and women entrepreneurs who play important roles in development of countries. Research indicates that women entrepreneurs are playing an important role in most developed countries and also some developing countries (Brush, 1992). However, the number of women entrepreneurs' participation is still relatively small compared to men-owned businesses (Minniti & Arenius, 2003 in Idris & Tan, 2017). Female entrepreneurs like Oprah Winfrey, Rhonda Byrone for example have already proved the concept that these women are not only recognized as the house makers but also as an entrepreneur. The assumption that 21<sup>st</sup> century women can equally be equipped to face the challenges in their personal as well as their professional life indicates the perception held about women in business. Most female academic entrepreneurs do it to impact the lives of young people and to give their students the practical experience of what it takes to be in the business world. Most women who become

entrepreneurs these days are also educators from personal experience of combining teaching and own business which helps to create positive impact on their students, teaching from practical experience. However, the fact still remains that most female entrepreneurs are mostly confronted with more challenges than their male counterparts hearing from the horse's mouth and from personal experiences, although this is subject to further debate and future research.

The mini research has focused on the gap in literature as presented below on factors, challenges and benefits experienced by the female participants in their combined roles of full time teaching and being an entrepreneur, impact on their students, institutions and personal development.

## **Methodology**

As stated above, the main purpose of this paper was to explore literature and research around challenges confronting professionals (Teachers) who tend to combine their job roles as teachers and also business owners. It was important to speak to some of the participants in person and on phone to find out how they perceived their roles in combining two busy jobs, impact on their students, institutions and personal development; also sharing personal experience in similar situation. A combination of qualitative and quantitative research paradigms was employed to seek the perceptions of some professionals who were able to combine academic work and being an entrepreneur, challenges faced in the combined roles on their students, institution and professional development were gathered and analysed. A combined approach to research was very important in generating rich data that informed opinion and to reach a conclusion. The planned use of two or more different data collection techniques was very important to achieve good result and compare findings. In some cases, the integration of different methods within a single framework and set of priorities specified within the overall research design helps to capture rich data. The value of combining methods is that it allows for the triangulation of data (Punch, 2005), recognises the similarities between qualitative and quantitative approaches (Blaxter et al., 2001), is less constraining than relying upon a single method (Morse, 2003, p. 195) and, crucially, strengthens the findings that are produced, hence the initial exploration of literature provided us with first-hand information coupled with the face to face and telephone interviews, including personal experience and observations helped to provide the analysis and the comments from the participants labelled as (E) for confidentiality, in line to ethical compliance and obligations. The findings are analysed with linked literature and comments from some of the participants as headed below.

## **Participants' comments and analyses of findings**

### *Factors that promote female academic entrepreneurship*

#### *Personal factors*

There are factors that present challenges, determinants and barriers to women in their choice of combining business with academic roles. Personal circumstances such as income stability in the family as some women are the main bread winner of their families; they face challenges along with the ambition and aspirations to

succeed in the career. To overcome these challenges women need to become active academic entrepreneurs which they can have flexibility as well as feasibility. From a personal experience, the urge to combine academic roles as well as being a business owner was an ambition from a young age and teaching career in business subjects, as well as family. Putting theory into practice of teaching was a major urge to be in the field of combining both tasks. This was also applicable to some of the participants interviewed:

*The desire to accomplish my career goal was a motive behind having a hair dressing saloon and being a teacher, it comes with challenges and hard work, but rewarding on the long run. (E2)*

#### *Organizational factors*

There is a stereotype that indicates that female entrepreneurs lack leadership or managerial decision making ability. Women are perceived by the society as emotional rather than logical and subject to show their emotions. It is obvious that female entrepreneurs face organisational turbulence particularly in the field of partnership with other organisations which can hinder decision to offer contracts. Another participant affirmed this with her statement:

*One of the main challenges I faced as an entrepreneur was getting contracts renewed, I worked so hard to impress my partners, even when they are at fault, I had to comply with their specifications, the most interesting, my male counter parts had more access than me. However, I never gave up, but persevered and today, I can proudly say that it has made a great impact in my career development, putting theory into practice in the classroom. (E4)*

#### *Societal factors*

The stereotypes or the traditions of the society or community have impact on women entrepreneurs, hence a big deterrent. The stereotyping, negative perceptions of the society and community can have impact on female entrepreneurs, particularly coming from the ethnic minority group; can hinder success in the business.

*The experience of one of us as an entrepreneur was the fact that being a woman from black minority group was a big challenge faced, with some customers being biased in a community dominated by different race to see a black woman in a successful business, more so, multi-tasking. First impression was that, the business will not survive being run by a black woman, but perception changed when people realised that She was a big asset and can make a big change to the community as an entrepreneur, therefore stereotyping is a killer to entrepreneurship business and has led to failures. (E6)*

### *Women academic entrepreneurs and their rewards*

#### *Financial freedom and multiple revenue*

Female entrepreneurs are confronted with problems of accessing finance from experience, hence limiting the business growth, expansion and in most cases failure. As a result, women entrepreneurs are more cautious about having a financial stability and do not want to invest their time and money in an unprofitable business. Therefore, the economic conditions of a family may not be stable and in most cases, one income may not be sufficient enough in most families with children or other financial commitments.

*It is obvious that most women entrepreneurs will use higher education or any education as a platform to plethora their source of income and also receive the stability required to sustain the demand of the family. Experience affirms the above, as an entrepreneur, the fear of unknown and financial instability in some cases, could result in combing job roles to sustain the business and cope with family financial demands. (E7)*

#### *Non-traditional student cohort*

Most female entrepreneurs aspire for their own business due to the demands and the need to increase the non-traditional students, hence, the need for more rapidly partnership among universities and industries to tackle a huge number of major challenges faced by in the global world. The need for academic entrepreneur is also increasing especially the women academic entrepreneurs. Women academic entrepreneurs promote and cultivate the entrepreneurial culture among the non-traditional students to encourage them to become successful entrepreneur, hence leading to more and more professional women becoming entrepreneurs. In addition, most academic female entrepreneurs have realised the benefits of linking their practical experience to the benefits of their students.

*I share my practical experience with my students particularly in one of my modules which require students to carry out a research on challenges facing their chosen profession or career, also those wanting to have their own business after their studies. Sharing what it takes to run a business from practical experience gives them the first-hand knowledge. (E8)*

#### *Change agents*

Most women entrepreneurs in academia can act as a catalyst to bringing the desired changes in education institution as well as the students who aspire to become an entrepreneur. Women academic entrepreneurs can become an entrepreneur within the education system to enhance the employability skills of the students and more so, most of the modules require input on employability skill. As stated by one of the participants:

*Developing myself for the practice of business and putting theory into practice to educate my students gave me the motivation to combine teaching career and being an entrepreneurs. Useful experience to share with students and colleagues, but hard to work and not easy to do it all, hence I gave up and sold my business. (E10)*

#### *Innovation*

Innovation is one of the key characteristics for any entrepreneurs to develop their business through organic or inorganic growth particularly in the fast growing world of innovation and It advancement which everyone business needs to embrace. Innovation plays a pivotal role in the field of education, entrepreneurship and environment. Academic women entrepreneurs laid a foundation by promoting innovative teaching practices based on their experience as an educator as well as an entrepreneur. Being a female entrepreneur obviously is prone to risks and this is evidenced by personal experience, however most of the participants interviewed are ready to take calculative risks, and also identified new way of teaching or new way of promoting entrepreneurship among the students as well as in the society. Women

are ready to act as knowledge brokers by passing the information from generation to generation, as commented by one of the participants:

*I love my teaching job, but I combined it with looking after my late parents' business that I inherited. Father, before passing on, insisted that the business remains the property of the family generation that geared to innovation and passing on the practical experience to younger generation. This is what has kept me combining teaching and being a business owner; however, it requires good time, good leadership and motivation. (E12)*

#### *Enhanced working conditions*

Women entrepreneurs are in a position to seek better working conditions when compared to the male entrepreneurs as they already have an improved working conditions as evidence from the comments from the participants. Most women left their full time jobs or their business to ensure they have stable income at the same time they have better working conditions which they never had before and this is confirmed by one the participants. Women in their profession were not given a priority to receive a first class pay check or better working hours, though they have been given an opportunity for flexi-working. Most corporate organisations permit their male members to travel in a first class or work from home options, however it is still a question mark for women in their early profession. By becoming an academic entrepreneur they are able to balance their life. This will enhance the quality of their life and also able to support their children (Kariv, 2013).

*As commented, I combined business and my academic work to have freedom and work balance which I enjoy being my own Boss, good for my career, practical experience to share with my students and at the end of it, value added to my organisational goals. (E14)*

## **Conclusion**

The paper presents key challenges faced by female professional entrepreneurs who combine their teaching roles with being entrepreneurs. Some teachers derive joy and benefits in having their personal businesses and education roles, which they are confronted with by circumstances and factors discussed above. It is obvious from discussion that most of the participants in this research that combine job roles do that to enhance their careers, make more money or be their own boss. However, most of them have found the job daunting as it seem more difficult for the female entrepreneurs combining full time teaching with owning a business, hence some drop out and some persevere to the end. Others have also gained good experience and skills to enhance their students' experience of the nature of the industries and challenges faced by entrepreneurs. In return, students have developed practical experience, theoretical skill and knowledge and in return, value added to the organisation and personal development. We therefore realised from the research that it is possible to combine being an entrepreneur and a teacher and to achieve this; one has to be determined to persevere with motivation. The work is on its early stage. The findings present the group with areas for further research to explore how male teachers who combine teaching with personal business perceive the challenges an area for future investigation. This presents further areas for research to further

investigate why some professionals fail in trying to combine job roles of being in academy and business owner, also to extend the work to male teachers' views.

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