

Influence of Entrepreneurial Leadership Education on Poverty Reduction as Perceived by Academic Staff of Tertiary Institutions in South East, Nigeria

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DOI: 10.56201/ijssmr.v10.no10.2024.pg167.180

Abstract

The study examined the influence of entrepreneurial leadership education on poverty reduction as perceived by academic staff of tertiary institutions in South East, Nigeria. In pursuit of the objectives, three research questions were drafted and answered while three null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 levels of significance. Survey research design was adopted for the study. Population of the study comprised targeted 13,223 lecturers, from universities, polytechnics and colleges of education while a sample size of 1,300, representing 10% of the lecturers was drawn through proportionate sampling technique. An instrument, titled 'Entrepreneurial Leadership Education and Poverty Reduction Questionnaire' (ELEPRQ) which was validated by three academic research experts was used for the data collection. Reliability of the questionnaire was confirmed through Cronbach's Alpha method with a cumulative coefficient of 0.81. The researcher, together with 10 research assistants administered and retrieved the responded instrument. Mean and Standard deviation were utilized in the analysis of the research question while One-Way ANOVA was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. Findings of the study revealed among other results that the mean ratings of lecturers on the extent to which training on adapting to changes (innovative leadership) influence poverty reduction did not differ significantly based on the categories of higher institutions (university, polytechnic and college of education). The study concluded that entrepreneurial leadership education was perceived by academic staff as having influence on poverty alleviation in South East, Nigeria. It was recommended that academic staff, especially those in educational management, administration, planning and leadership, should be steadily trained to become more enterprising by developing self-owned businesses, so as to create more sources on income.

Keywords: *Perceived Influence, Entrepreneurial Leadership Education, Poverty Reduction, Academic Staff, Tertiary Institutions.*

Introduction

In the world we live in, reducing poverty situation of different magnitude remains the major concern of every responsibly leader. In Nigeria, just as most developing parts of the world, different political leadership have sought to reduce poverty using a designed agenda, even though it still seems debatable if much needed targets have been achieved. Supporting this observation, Aneke, Aduaka and Ezech (2022) posited that in Nigeria, Yar'Adua's Seven-Point Agenda were centred on wealth creation, with entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship

education (EE) being prominently emphasized. In pursuance of the goal of reducing poverty through wealth creation, the Federal Government directed all tertiary institutions in the country to run entrepreneurship studies programme as a compulsory course for all students, irrespective of their disciplines with effect from 2007/2008 academic session, as well as establish centres for entrepreneurial development in each of the tertiary institutions where different skills would be taught. It is thought that after the entrepreneurial studies, graduates of the tertiary institutions would be able to set up and run their own business with a view of contributing to creating job and helping to reduce poverty.

Etymologically, the term entrepreneur is derived from the French word *entrepreneur* which implies a person who engages in the task or risk of production or a person who builds a business from existing opportunities for profit (Asotibe, 2015). Entrepreneurship involves using one's initiative to identify and utilize available opportunities, and adjust to changes in the midst of business uncertainties. Entrepreneurial education includes all forms of learning, education and training which contribute to acquisition of entrepreneurial competences and behaviour with a commercial objective, creating value or supporting productivity (Asotibe, 2015). Leadership education entails offering guidelines to students and teachers, shaping educational policies and processes and creating conducive learning environment in order to influence individuals towards achieving educational goals or making progress.

Entrepreneurship is concerned with creating long-term value, and regular cash flow streams for an individual or group of individuals for the future through the process of imagination, initiative and innovation for the purpose of maximizing profits and minimizing risk with the view of long term expansion (Mbwa, Adiaka & Katurab, 2024). Similarly, entrepreneurship leadership education is to be exposed to, and equipped with the skills and knowledge to start, manage and lead a business to success (Agu, Ugwu & Ejesi, 2021). Agu, et al explained that the essence is to among others, provide graduates with enough training which will make them creative and innovative in identifying new business opportunities; manage risks that accompany businesses; receive necessary support to help establish a career in small and medium size business, develop creative thinking, opportunity seeking skills and received general business advisory services (Mbwa, *et al* ,2024). This shows that entrepreneurial leadership education is indispensable in pursuit of poverty alleviation. This in line with the view of Bruton and Ketchen (2023), who posited that the various dimensions of entrepreneurial leadership, such as: training on adapting to changes/innovativeness, managing risks and utilization of opportunities be properly given attention, in order to prepare future entrepreneurs on the tasks ahead. It is thought that effective adoption and implementation of these aspects of entrepreneurial leadership education could impact poverty reduction positively.

Poverty can be considered as a situation of lack and want of very basic necessities being experienced by some individuals due to shortage of financial resource to afford them. Similarly, Mbwa, et al (2024) asserted that poverty is any unwanted situation of lack of income or shortage of assets, the lack of competence, and confidence resulting in disempowerment and inability to afford the very basic need for a living. Poverty results from and even consists of a lack of basic securities, which not only include financial resources, but also education, employment, housing, health care and other related aspects leading to deprivation (Misango & Ongiti, 2023). Undoubtedly, poverty is a big problem that government and non-governmental organisations, have been struggling to tackle to no avail.

It is common to here different political office holders make speeches on their intentions to reduce or alleviate poverty. To reduce poverty means to curtail, alleviate and make its consequence less severe on the victims of lack and want. Even among the academic communities, it is understandable the bad state of the Nigerian economy has further constrained many lecturers from affording the basic necessities of life to keep them and their love ones healthy and happy. This is really a source of worry to most academic staff of higher institutions of learning in Nigeria.

Academic staff in the context of higher institutions of learning might be interchangeably used with lecturers, faculty members, educational professionals, teaching and research staff (Vignette, 2024). It comprises all the individuals who are employed to teach, research and/or provide academic support in tertiary institutions. Academic staff members are individuals employed by educational institutions who contribute to the institution's core functions. They include faculty members who teach courses and conduct research, as well as various administrative and support staff who play roles in academic programme management, student services and institutional administration. Academic staff collectively contribute to the academic and administrative well-being of the tertiary institution of their primary assignment.

Tertiary institutions refer to all formal post-secondary education establishments, including universities, polytechnics, colleges, technical training institutes, and vocational schools that are primarily established to produce the required workforce, promote research, innovations and development (World Bank Group, n.d.). Tertiary education might as well be referred to as higher institution, and are instrumental in fostering economic growth, creation of wealth for poverty reduction, and boosting shared prosperity. This is partly the reason entrepreneurship education was thought to be better implemented in Nigeria through the tertiary institutions based on the trust that they possess the capacity to nurture future entrepreneurs whose businesses should help to reduce poverty in the country.

However, some scholars have lamented on the inability of the tertiary institutions to serve the nation up to expectations. Agbonlahor (2016); Agu, et al (2021); Amadi and Amakodi (2019); Aneke, Aduaka and Ezeh (2022); Bruton and Ketchen (2023) observed that that despite the profound benefits of entrepreneurship education, many graduates still remain unemployed for a long time after graduation, due to lack of lecturers/trainers with the right capacity, absence of curricular capacity to support the training, limited infrastructural support, limited government support, and overemphasis on theory delivery, political instability, lack of improvement in infrastructure, lack of investment, deficient teaching methodologies, lack of commitment on the part of lecturers and students, inadequacy of national policy and structural adjustment. It is against this backdrop that this study sought to examine the influence of entrepreneurial leadership education on poverty reduction as perceived by academic staff of tertiary institutions in South East, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Nigeria, as a developing country is plagued by the problem of poverty. Government sees and supports entrepreneurship as a tool for mitigating poverty. Entrepreneurial leadership education is deemed necessary for inculcating entrepreneurial skills required for economic growth and development. It aims at providing, learners and teachers relevant knowledge, skills, motivation, training, mentoring and guidance for starting or managing a business successfully. Regrettably, the country is still grappling with high poverty rate.

South-east region of the country is also affected by poverty in spite of the fact that the people have a culture of entrepreneurship (producing, buying and selling of goods) as their predominant occupation, and entrepreneurship education is incorporated in the school curriculum. In the region and beyond, more graduates have continued to leave higher institutions of learning with neither any hope of being gainfully employed, nor creating any sustainable job for themselves. The situation could partly be the reason for increasing crimes, includes cyber theft, kidnapping, robbery, attacks, cult extortions, bullying, thuggery, just to mention a few. This throws the region into worries with not alternation solution being put in place. Based on the ugly situation, the problem of the study is to investigate the extent of the influence of entrepreneurial leadership education on poverty reduction as perceived by academic staff in tertiary institutions in South East, Nigeria.

Research Questions

In the study, the following research questions were provided answers for:

1. To what extent does entrepreneurial training on adapting to changes in business influence poverty reduction?
2. To what extent does inculcating entrepreneurial skill of risk management influence poverty reduction?
3. To what extent does guiding learners and teachers on utilization of business opportunities influence poverty reduction?

Hypotheses

Each of the following null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

1. There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of perception of lecturers from universities, polytechnics and colleges of education on the extent to which entrepreneurial training on adapting to changes influence poverty reduction.
2. There is no significant difference in mean ratings of perception of lecturers from universities, polytechnics and colleges of education on the extent to which inculcating entrepreneurial skill of risk management influence poverty reduction did not differ significantly.
3. There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of perception of lecturers from universities, polytechnics and colleges of education on the extent to which guiding learners and teachers on utilization of business opportunities influence poverty reduction.

Method

Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. Population of the study comprised targeted 13,223 lecturers, from universities, polytechnics and colleges of education while a sample size of 1,300, representing 10% of the lecturers was drawn through proportionate sampling technique. An instrument, titled 'Entrepreneurial Leadership Education and Poverty Reduction Questionnaire' (ELEPRQ) which was validated by three academic research experts was used for the data collection. Reliability of the questionnaire was confirmed through Cronbach's Alpha method with a cumulative coefficient of 0.81. The researcher, together with 10 research assistants administered and retrieved the responded instrument. Mean and Standard deviation were utilized in the analysis of data from the research questions while One-Way ANOVA was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

Decision Rules

Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to test each of the null hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance. The principle is, ‘reject a null hypothesis if p-value is less than the 0.05, but do not reject if p-value is greater than 0.05.

Also, for the research questions, the Mean rating was used. For the remarks, any item with Mean rating of 2.5 and above was taken or considered as high extent, and vice versa.

Result

Research Questions 1: To what extent does entrepreneurial training on adapting to changes influence poverty reduction?

Table 1:

Mean ratings of responses of lecturers from universities, polytechnics and colleges of education on the extent to which entrepreneurial training on adapting to changes influence poverty reduction.

S/N	Statements on the influence of entrepreneurial training of adapting to changes on poverty reduction	University Lecturers (N=550) Mean	Polytechnic Lecturers (N=400) Mean	College Lecturers (N=350) Mean
1.	Organizing entrepreneurial training on adaptability to changes helps individuals quickly adjust to new job markets, technologies, or industries, ensuring they remain employable and economically secure, thereby reducing poverty risk.	2.56	2.64	2.65
2.	Sensitizing on adaptability fosters creative problem-solving, enabling people to start new businesses or improve existing ones, which can lead to income generation and poverty alleviation.	2.77	2.79	2.74
3.	Teaching individuals for adaptation to environmental changes, especially in vulnerable areas enhances entrepreneurial mindset for survival and thriving, which helps to prevent poverty.	2.71	2.59	2.60
4.	Coaching and pace-setting on adapting to technological advancements ensures people are not left behind in the digital economy, giving them access to better job opportunities and helping lift them out of poverty.	2.72	2.57	2.69
5.	Mentoring on adaptability skills empowers individuals to shift across different sectors or locations for better job prospects, preventing long-term unemployment and poverty.	2.77	2.81	2.88

6.	Organizing adaptability to changes equips individuals to understand economic processes and adjust their financial behaviours during economic downturn, allowing them to maintain stability and avoid falling into poverty.	2.70	2.67	2.66
7.	Inculcating life and social skills helps one adapt to social changes and leverage new opportunities, such as access to services or new markets, which reduce poverty and ensure economic success.	2.78	2.70	2.73
8.	Encouraging training people to continually learn and adapt keeps them competitive in evolving job markets, increasing their earning potential and reducing poverty.	2.74	2.78	2.75
9.	Training in adaptability often includes teaching how to access new resources and develop capacity for pursuit of entrepreneurial activities thereby helping vulnerable populations mitigate the effects of poverty.	2.82	2.79	2.80
10.	Integrating adaptability entrepreneurial skill can transform individuals to improve responses to shifting market demands, helping maintain livelihoods and reduce poverty in rural areas.	2.75	2.78	2.73
	Cluster Mean	2.73	2.70	2.70

Table 1 above revealed that the cluster mean of ratings on the extent to which training on adapting to changes influence poverty reduction are 2.73, 2.70 and 2.70 for lecturers from Universities, Polytechnics and Colleges of Education, respectively. This implies that majority or all the items of training on adapting to changes were considered to be influential in reducing poverty to a high extent. The remark is based on the values of each item being greater than the theoretical 2.5 benchmark for acceptance.

Research Questions 2: To what extent does inculcating entrepreneurial risk management skill influence poverty reduction?

Table 2:

Mean ratings of responses of inculcating entrepreneurial skill of risk management of lecturers from universities, polytechnics and colleges of education on the extent to which influence poverty reduction.

S/N	Statements on the influence of inculcating entrepreneurial skill of risk management	University Lecturers (N=550) Mean	Polytechnic Lecturers (N=400) Mean	College Lecturers (N=350) Mean
1.	Equipping people with knowledge about risk management helps build financial resilience, enabling them to better withstand economic shocks, which reduces vulnerability to poverty	2.71	2.75	2.76
2.	People equipped with knowledge of risk management are more likely to make informed decisions, which can prevent them from falling into poverty during uncertain circumstances.	2.79	2.74	2.72
3.	Equipping one with knowledge of risk management often includes information on insurance schemes, which can protect individuals from falling into poverty due to unexpected events like illness or crop failure.	2.68	2.71	2.70
4.	Coaching on understanding of risks enables individuals to diversify their livelihoods, making them less dependent on a single source of income, thereby reducing poverty risks.	2.70	2.60	2.67
5.	Motivating people on risk taking and management encourages the adoption of sustainable practices, which contribute to long-term economic stability and poverty reduction.	2.62	2.74	2.70
6.	Inculcating and adequate knowledge of managing risks will more likely make to succeed and grow their businesses, leading to job creation and poverty alleviation in their communities.	2.78	2.70	2.70
7.	Organizing training risk management helps people to better manage natural resources, reducing over-reliance on unstable resources and contributing to economic security.	2.65	2.68	2.67

8.	Leadership education on risk management often includes lessons on credit management, helping people avoid debt traps, which can exacerbate poverty.	2.68	2.71	2.70
9.	Influencing other to understanding health-related risks and prevention methods can reduce the financial burden of medical costs, and consequent avert such expenses for more savings.	2.90	2.86	2.85
10.	Inculcating risk management entrepreneurial skills encourages community-based solutions and collective action, which can strengthen local economies and reduce poverty collectively.	2.67	2.70	2.77
	Cluster Mean	2.71	2.72	2.72

Table 2, revealed that the cluster mean of ratings are 2.71, 2.72 and 2.72 for lecturers from Universities, Polytechnics and Colleges of Education, respectively. This indicates that the individual items on the influence of risk management training on poverty reduction are considered to be of high extent. It should be recalled that the benchmark for this remark is 2.50, and each of the cluster mean ratings aforementioned is greater than 2.50.

Research Questions 3: To what extent does training on utilization of opportunities influence poverty reduction?

Table 3:

Mean ratings of responses of lecturers from universities, polytechnics and colleges of education on the extent to which guiding learners and teachers on utilization of opportunities influence poverty reduction.

S/N	Statement of the influence of guiding learners and teachers on utilization of opportunities on poverty reduction	University Lecturers (N=550) Mean	Polytechnic Lecturers (N=400) Mean	College Lecturers (N=350) Mean
1.	Mentoring people to identify and utilize job opportunities equips them with the skills to secure employment, directly reducing poverty by providing stable income.	2.70	2.63	2.67
2.	Guiding individuals to recognize market gaps and opportunities fosters entrepreneurship, which can lead to business creation, job generation, and poverty reduction.	2.72	2.80	2.68

3.	Directing individual on how to utilize financial opportunities, such as loans or grants, allows individuals to start or expand businesses, enhancing income and reducing poverty.	2.66	2.68	2.72
4.	Motivating and supporting the learning of how to identify educational or vocational training opportunities helps individuals gain skills that increase their employability, lifting them out of poverty.	2.64	2.67	2.69
5.	Guiding individuals to recognize and access government support programmes helps them secure resources that can alleviate poverty.	2.69	2.70	2.72
6.	Coaching learners on the value of networking and forming strategic partnerships opens doors to collaborations, job referrals, or shared resources, helping to combat poverty.	2.61	2.61	2.64
7.	Directing individuals to tap into international markets expands their customer base and income potential, driving economic growth and poverty reduction.	2.71	2.71	2.68
8.	Guiding learners and teachers on how to capitalize on opportunities in the digital economy (e-commerce, freelancing, etc.) enables people to earn income remotely, reducing poverty, especially in underserved areas.	2.80	2.77	2.79
9.	Motivating people to seize educational and career advancement opportunities leads to upward social mobility, allowing them to escape the poverty cycle.	2.67	2.69	2.65
10.	Strengthening and understanding of how to utilize agricultural opportunities, such as access to better seeds, tools, or markets, can increase productivity and income, reducing poverty.	2.60	2.72	2.69
	Cluster Mean	2.68	2.70	2.69

On Table 3, it is found that the cluster mean of ratings are 2.68, 2.70 and 2.69 for lecturers from Universities, Polytechnics and Colleges of Education, respectively. This indicates that to a high extent, the individual items on the guiding of learners and teachers on utilization of opportunities influences poverty reduction. Statistically, the mean rating of each item is greater than the benchmark, 2.5.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of perception of lecturers

from universities, polytechnics and colleges of education on the extent to which entrepreneurial training on adapting to changes influence poverty reduction.

Table 4:

Summary of Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) Statistics on the mean ratings of lecturers from Universities, Polytechnics and Colleges of Education on the extent to which entrepreneurial training on adapting to changes influence poverty reduction.

Status	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F-ratio	F-critical	Prob.	α	Remark
Between Groups	.42	2	0.42	0.72	3.15	.10	.05	Not Significant
Within Groups	2,300.91	1,298	1.52					
Total	2,318.21	1,300						

Table 4 revealed that 0.05 is the level of significance, α while the probability level of significance, p-value is 0.10. This revealed that p-value, 0.10 is greater than α , 0.05. Thus, the null hypothesis is not rejected. This implies that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of lecturers from Universities, Polytechnics and Colleges of Education on the extent to which entrepreneurial training on adapting to changes influence poverty reduction.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference in mean ratings of responses of lecturers from universities, polytechnics and colleges of education on the extent to which inculcating entrepreneurial skill of risk management influence poverty reduction.

Table 5:

Summary of Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) Statistics on the mean ratings of lecturers from universities, polytechnics and colleges of education on the extent to which inculcating entrepreneurial skill of risk management influence poverty reduction.

Status	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F-ratio	F-critical	Prob.	α	Remark
Between Groups	.67	2	0.67	0.38	3.15	.08	.05	Not Significant
Within Groups	2,224.10	1,298	1.61					
Total	2,241.81	1,300						

On Table 5, it is observed that the p-value = 0.08 and level of significance, $\alpha = 0.05$. This implies that the value of level of significance, 0.05 is less than the p-value, 0.08. This leads to none rejection of the null hypothesis. This entails that the mean ratings of lecturers from universities, polytechnics and colleges of education on the extent to which inculcating entrepreneurial skill of risk management influence poverty reduction did not differ significantly.

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of perception of lecturers from universities, polytechnics and colleges of education on the extent to which guiding learners and teachers on utilization of opportunities influence poverty reduction.

Table 6:
Summary of Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) Statistics on the mean ratings of lecturers from universities, polytechnics and colleges of education on the extent to which guiding learners and teachers on utilization of opportunities influence poverty reduction.

Status	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F-ratio	F-critical	Prob.	α	Remark
Between Groups	.77	2	0.77					Not
Within Groups	2,281.12	1,298	1.91	.66	3.15	.11	.05	Significant
Total	2,302.17	1,300						

Table 6 showed that P-value is 0.11 while alpha level, α is 0.05, meaning that the value of p is greater than the value of α . This implies that the null hypothesis is not rejected. Hence, there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of lecturers from universities, polytechnics and colleges of education on the extent to which guiding learners and teachers on utilization of opportunities influence poverty reduction.

Discussion of Findings

Entrepreneurial Training on adapting to changes and poverty reduction

The study reported that training on adapting to changes (innovativeness) were considered to be influential in reducing poverty to a high extent. It was also reported that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of lecturers from Universities, Polytechnics and Colleges of Education on the extent to which training on adapting to changes influence poverty reduction. This entails that the various categories of lecturers were indifferent that training on adapting to changes influences poverty reduction. The finding is slightly different from that of Obona, et al (2021) which reported that planning entrepreneurship programme, staff supervision and student mentoring have significant impact on unemployment reduction among tertiary institution graduates in Cross River State, Nigeria. The reviewed study did not single of training on adapting to changes, rather it looked at other aspects of entrepreneurship education that are thought to have impact on poverty reduction.

Inculcating entrepreneurial skill of risk management and poverty reduction

It was reported that risk management training has influence on poverty reduction to a high extent. Also the mean ratings of lecturers from Universities, Polytechnics and Colleges of Education on the extent to which training on risk management influence poverty reduction did not differ significantly. This is similar to the reported by Agu, et al (2021) which pointed out that entrepreneurial education provides graduates with enough training in risk management to make uncertainty bearing possible and easy, helping them establish a career in small and medium size businesses which are known to reduce poverty. They further reported that entrepreneurship education has the power to reduce poverty and raise the standard of living and life value in general.

Guiding learners and teachers on utilization of opportunities and poverty reduction

Additionally, the investigation revealed that to a high extent, guiding learners and teachers on utilization of opportunities has influence on poverty reduction. It subsequently reported that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of lecturers from

universities, polytechnics and colleges of education on the extent to which training on utilization of opportunities influence poverty reduction. This is in tandem with the report put forward by Buhari and Maguru (2020) that entrepreneurship education has the potential to develop students' competencies, knowledge and skills to confidently act on opportunities, address issues and solve problems that have arisen in their communities, with 71% of the respondents agreeing that entrepreneurship education in tertiary education's curriculum has been reducing the level of unemployment in Nigeria since its introduction, even though it might seem indirect.

Conclusion

The study concluded that entrepreneurial leadership education was perceived as having influence on poverty alleviation in South East, Nigeria. The examined dimensions of entrepreneurial leadership education, namely: entrepreneurial training on adapting to changes (innovativeness), inculcating risk management skill and guiding on utilization of opportunities were influential in reducing poverty. In this regard, perceptions of lecturers from universities, polytechnics and colleges of education did not differ significantly, meaning they agreed that the various aspects of entrepreneurial leadership education to a high extent have influence on poverty reduction. Although, poverty cannot be totally eliminated because of other economic factors, effective leadership education has been identified to have a great influence in curbing poverty.

Recommendations

Based on findings of the study, the following are recommended:

1. Academic staff, especially those in educational management, administration, planning and leadership, should be steadily trained to become more innovative and enterprising when developing and operating self-owned businesses. This will enable them become receptive of changes in their chosen niche.
2. Going into entrepreneurial ventures is a big risk filled with uncertainties, hence the knowledge of risk management should become prioritized. This will enable people become good risk bearers in their entrepreneurial adventures.
3. Being entrepreneurial and enterprising simply entails converting every promising opportunity into income or revenue source. With strategic training on the identification and utilization of opportunities to create businesses, both those in the academic community and those outside would become inspired to look out for gaps to fill in the business world.
4. For Nigeria and other countries to record economic success and reduce poverty through entrepreneurship leadership education, all sectors of the society must participate in influencing and promoting the entrepreneurship culture while government provides conducive educational environment for it to thrive.

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