



ENTREPRENEURIAL PRACTICAL SKILLS REQUIRED OF BUSINESS EDUCATION GRADUATES FOR SELF- EMPLOYMENT IN BAYELSA STATE

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Abstract

This study investigated entrepreneurial practice skills required of business education graduates for self-employment in Bayelsa State. The study adopted the survey research design and was guided by one research question and one null hypothesis. The population comprised 162 registered entrepreneurs in Bayelsa State. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire with for response options. Mean and standard deviation were used to analyze data relating to the research question while t-test statistic was used to test the hypothesis. The results showed that entrepreneurial practical skills were required of business education graduates for self-employment in Bayelsa State. Consequently, the study recommended that government at various levels should improve on their budgetary allocation financially to business education and training in order to facilitate learning to produce self-reliant graduates for the world of work instead of jobseekers.

Keywords: Unemployment, Entrepreneurship Education, Entrepreneurial Skills, and Entrepreneurial Practical Skills.

Introduction

Most nations in the world are clamoring for industrialization, but no nation can successfully implement a policy on industrialization where the teeming youth of that country do not possess entrepreneurial practical skills. Nigeria, as a developing country is also in need of her youth to have entrepreneurial practical skills. It is only through the acquisition of practical skills that individuals can surmount the current socio-economic challenges of un-employment, poverty and hunger.

Un-employment is a macro economic problem that does no one any good. It is a social malady. Its debilitating effects on individuals in the society are unquantifiable. Chukwu (2009), saw un-employment as the involuntary idleness of a person willing to work at the prevailing rate of pay but unable to find it. It is a negative situation where people who are willing and capable of working are unable to find suitable paid employment. It is one of the macro- economic problems which every responsible government is expected to monitor and regulate. Un-employment threatens the lives of Nigerians especially the youths, causing dejection, frustration, poverty and dependency on family members who have their own problems to take care of.

Unemployment in Nigeria has become endemic and requires a combination therapy. The therapy is the fusion of business and entrepreneurship education to fight Un-employment headlong. According to Sani (2011), business and entrepreneurship education render entrepreneurial knowledge and skills that cover a wide range of economic activities in any society as well as desirable business competencies necessary for self-reliance. This fusion is much relevant as it provides students with skills and knowledge to successfully launch and operate their own business ventures, provides them with the opportunity to develop practical skills and perspectives that are critical to



entrepreneurial success.

Osuala in Oduma (2012), saw entrepreneurship education and business education programme as part of the education programme that prepares individuals to undertake the information and/or operation of small business enterprises. It is a programme of instruction that enables the beneficiaries to be properly equipped to establish and operate profit-oriented business ventures. Entrepreneurship education has the potential to equip business education students with the relevant entrepreneurial spirit and skills for economic empowerment and employment generation (Nwokike, 2016). Business education has the capacity to make the recipients self-reliant if they are exposed to relevant entrepreneurial skills. Onyesorn and Umoeshiet (2013) described business education as that aspect of educational training which an individual receives with the primary motive of enabling the individual to acquire adequate attitudes, concepts, knowledge, understanding and skills in business activities for vocational usage.

Entrepreneurial skills are the ability of an individual to exploit an idea and create an enterprise not only for personal gain but also for social and developmental gain (Olagunje, 2014). Entrepreneurial skills are also transferable core skill groups that represent essential functional and enabling knowledge, skills, attitudes, and commercial understanding required by the 21st century workplace necessary for career success at all levels of employment and for all levels of education. This exposes the relevance of entrepreneurial skills both as an end in itself and as a means to an end, hence its capacity to enhance one's potentials for learning. Entrepreneurial skills can be defined as the ability to create something new with value by devoting the necessary time and effort, assuming the accompanying financial, psychic and social risks, and receiving the resulting rewards, personal satisfaction and independence (Hisrich, Richard, Peters, and Michael, 2002).

Formal descriptions and/or definitions characterize entrepreneurial skills as the ability to have self-belief, boldness, tenacity, passion, empathy, readiness to take expert advice, desire for immediate result, visionary and ability to recognize opportunity (salgadobanda, 2005). Kilby (2007), Stated that the array of possible entrepreneurial skills encompasses the perception of economic opportunity, technical and organizational innovations, gaining commands over scarce resources, taking responsibilities for internal management and for external advancement of the firm in all aspects. Entrepreneurial skill is the ability of an individual to exploit an idea and create an enterprise for the sustenance of one's self and the society ingeneral.

Udo-Aka (2010) suggested that entrepreneurial skills training helps the youth to develop the skills associated with entrepreneurship, such as the ability to take initiative, creatively seek out and identify business opportunities, develop budgets and forecast resource needs, understand various options for acquiring capital and the trade-offs associated with each option, and communicate effectively and market oneself and one's idea. Entrepreneurial skill training is a deliberate attempt to provide trainees with relevant knowledge, appropriate skills, competencies and right attitude to effectively run or manage a business outfit. Entrepreneurial skill training programmes provide the basics of starting and operating small businesses. Entrepreneurial practical skills give an individual the ability to process needed knowledge to produce goods and/ or services. Practical skills enable entrepreneurs to exhibit manipulative, processing and computerizing operations in business related activities towards success in an organization. Practical skills are related to knowledge and proficiency in activities involving process, methods and procedures as well as the ability to use tools and specific techniques efficiently (Osannwoyin and Igbinsosa, 2005). Practical skills enable entrepreneurs to run the day to day activities of a business (Anyakoha, 2009). Entrepreneurs that have entrepreneurial practical skills are good in planning and organizing, good in decision making, having comprehensive knowledge on several areas when starting or running a business like in the areas of business knowledge, entrepreneurial knowledge, opportunity-specific



knowledge, venture-specific knowledge and more. It is expected that entrepreneurs need to acquire practical or technical skills so that, they can effectively accomplish specific tasks in an organization. The possession or acquisition of these entrepreneur practical skills enables entrepreneurs to identify and exploit opportunities for the survival and success of business ventures. The possession of these entrepreneur skills by business education graduates will not only help them to gain employment but also help them to progress within an enterprise as entrepreneurs so as to achieve one's potentials and contribute successfully to enterprise strategic directions.

An individual becomes self-employed through proper engagement of these acquired entrepreneurial practical skills in business ventures. Self-employment is the seizing of available opportunities to generate or get involved in activities that could be realized for development and profit making. Onoh (2013) observed that self-employment can mean the promotion of free enterprise and self-sufficiency by creating and spreading wealth to the grass root level as a contribution to economic growth, employment generation and social progress. For self-employed person to be successful such a person must possess the requisite skills and these skills can be gotten through entrepreneurship education. These employability skills are not specific to one particular career path but are useful across all employment sectors. Employability or soft skills are the blocks of your career. Self-employability is a concept that describes individuals who have the necessary soft skills that enable them to be successful in business related activities through positive engagement. These employability skills are classically essential credentials for many job positions and hence have become necessary for an individual's employment success at just about any level within a business environment (Jon & Anna, 2015). Self-employment can thrive well in good environment.

Developing economies are prone to weak institutions, fragile business environment, social problems such as poverty and un-employment. Faced with these complex problems in their weak environment, business activities spring to escape the poverty trap and maximize opportunities in different locations (Deng, Hofman & Nywman, 2013). Location offers mixed advantages to enterprises and resources availability enhances growth and survival advantage depending on the size and type of business. Location of specific resources could serve as a pull or push factor for business in developing economies (Sorasalmi & Tuovinen, 2016). Business in urban locations enjoys location-specific factors such as infrastructural amenities, value chains and labour supply with different skills sets. Conversely, in rural locations there are unique resource advantages that are missing in urban location such as lower cost of living and doing business, strong cultural and institutional frameworks. Thus, SME serve as conduits in the value chain for businesses. Therefore, enterprises in their locations do enhance their chances of survival.

Statement of the Problems

Unemployment in Nigeria has become endemic. Her strive to becoming an industrialized nation is a mirage due to her teaming youths without entrepreneurial practical skills. It is only through entrepreneurial skills training that individuals will acquire practical skills that can be used to surmount the current socio-economic challenges of unemployment, poverty and hunger. According to Moses (2015) a survey carried out by the national universities commission (NUC) showed that Nigerian university graduates lacked basic job competencies as well as oral communication and managerial skills. The Association of Graduates Recruiters (2007) in the UK identified that there was a skill gap in the graduates leaving universities. Plastrik, Seitzer and Taylor (2008), observed that, if nothing is done to improve the educational performance, the gap between the skill needs of industries and SMEs and the skills received by graduates will continue to grow. However, there seems to be no clear evidence of entrepreneurial practical skills required of business education graduates to be self-reliant. This study was therefore designed to



empirically ascertain the entrepreneurial practical skills required of business education graduates for self-employment in Bayelsa State.

Research Question

The following research question guided the study:

1. What entrepreneurial practical skills are required of business education graduates for self-employment in Bayelsa State?

Research Hypothesis

The following null hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance.

1. There is no significant difference in the mean responses of urban and rural SMEs operators regarding entrepreneurial practical skills required of business education graduates for self-employment in Bayelsa State.

Method

The study adopted a survey research design. The population comprised 162 registered (SMEs) operators in Bayelsa State. The entire population was studied because of its manageable size. The instrument for data collection was a validated questionnaire structured on a four-point rating scale of Highly Required (HR), Required (R), Lowly Required (LR) and Not Required (NR). The reliability of the instrument was through a pilot test and data collected analyzed using Cronbach alpha which gave internal consistency of 0.78 was achieved. Out of the 162 copies of the questionnaire administered to the respondents by the researcher and two research assistants, a total of 155 copies (representing 95.7%) were correctly filled and used for the data analysis. Data obtained were analyzed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research question while t-test statistics was used to test the hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance. The item by item decision relative to the questionnaire items was based on the real limit of numbers. Any item with a mean of 2.50 and above was accepted as required still while any item with mean less than 2.50 was not required still. The null hypothesis will be accepted when the t-calculated value is less than the t-critical value and/or will be rejected when the t-calculated value is equal or greater than the t-critical value.

Results

Research Question

What entrepreneurial practical skills are required of business education graduates for self-employment in Bayelsa State?

Table 1: Mean Ratings of Responses of Respondents on Entrepreneurial Practical Skills Required of Business Education Graduates for Self-employment in Bayelsa State.

S/N	Items	X	SD	Remarks
1	Ability to have calculating skills	3.40	0.52	Required
2	Ability to make business activities for easy operations	3.78	0.60	Required
3	Ability to have computer operating skills	3.68	0.47	Required
4	Ability to organize job for better performance	3.38	0.51	Required
5	Ability to have data processing skilled	3.72	0.52	Required
6	Having proficiency in business related activities	3.38	0.48	Required
7	Ability to use tools for production purpose	3.81	0.51	Required
8	Ability to apply specific business techniques efficiency	3.56	0.50	Required
9	Ability to run the day to day activities of the business	3.27	0.71	Required
10	Ability to follow job specification for good performance	3.79	0.51	Required
11	Ability to articulate economic activities for profit making	3.74	0.64	Required
	Grand Mean	3.59	0.54	Required

Note: X = Mean, NR = Not Required, R = Required.

Data in Table 1 show that all the eleven items achieved the real limit number of 2.50 and above. This indicates that the respondents agreed that entrepreneurial practical skills are highly required of business education graduates for self-employment in Bayelsa State as perceived by the SMEs Operators.

The standard deviation of the eleven items range between 0.47 to 0.71. This indicates that the responses of the respondents are close to one another.

Hypothesis Testing

The null hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance using t-test statistics.

Ho₁ There is no significant difference in the mean responses of urban and rural SMEs operators regarding entrepreneurial practical skills required of business education graduates for self-employment in Bayelsa State.

Table 2. *t-test Summary on the mean ratings of urban and rural SMEs Operators regarding entrepreneurial practical skills required of business education graduates for self-employment in Bayelsa State.*

S/N		N	X	SD	T-cal	T-crit	Level of Sig	Remark
1.	Urban	11	3.6	0.5				
		7	3	2	0.39	1.96	0.05	Not rejected
2.	Rural	38	3.54	0.55				

Data in Table 2 reveal that at 0.05 level of significance, the t-calculated of 0.39 is less than t-critical value of 1.96. The hypothesis therefore, is not rejected. This implies that, there is no significant difference in the mean responses of urban and rural SMEs operators regarding perceived entrepreneurial practical skills required of business education graduates for self-employment in Bayelsa State.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study in respect to the research question identified entrepreneurial practical skills are required of business education graduates in Bayelsa State. They include ability to have calculative skills, make business activities for easy operations, have computer operating skills, organize jobs for better performance, have data processing skills, having proficiency in business related activities, use tools for production purpose and apply specific business techniques efficiency among others. The findings of this study agreed with that of Malachy, Yini and Ibrahim (2015) who found that managerial skills have significant impact on Small Scale business performance. In another study, Ottah (2017) found that the small and medium businesses would continue to be profit oriented so long as their operations possess practical marketing and communication skills.

The findings on the hypothesis tested showed that there is no significant difference in the mean responses of urban and rural SMEs operators regarding entrepreneurial practical skills required of business education graduates for self-employment in Bayelsa State. The findings of this study is in consonance with that of Smart (2016) who equally found no significant difference in the mean ratings of rural and urban entrepreneurial activities required of South Africa.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is very clear that the effectiveness and success of self-employment in small and medium scale enterprises is highly depended on the acquisition and possession of entrepreneurial practical skills through proper engagement of an individual. Entrepreneurial practical skills enable individuals in exhibiting manipulative, processing and computerizing operations in business related activities towards success in an organization operation in business related activities success in an organization.

These skills enable the entrepreneur to run the day to day activities of a business with ease. From the findings of this study, it's concluded that; the acquisition and possession of essential entrepreneurial practical skills by business education graduate will enhance their quality and employability for self and paid jobs in Nigeria labourmarket.



Recommendations

On the basis of the findings and conclusion from the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Business education students and graduates should develop appropriate vocational mindset and attitude towards dignity of labour and put into the use of knowledge and skills already acquired in business education to set up their own business.
2. Government at all levels should provide means of assisting skill acquisition training centre's financially in form of grant or soft loans. This will go a long way in replacing obsolete and depreciated equipment and facilities.

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