

ASSESSING THE LEVELS OF ENTREPRENEURIAL SKILLS ACQUISITION FOR EMPLOYMENT GENERATION AMONG BUSINESS EDUCATION STUDENTS

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Abstract

This study sought to examine the level of acquisition of entrepreneurial skills on employment generation among business education students in Uyo Local Government Area in Akwa Ibom State. The study was guided by two specific objectives, two research questions and two null hypotheses which were tested at 0.5 level of significance. A survey research design was adopted in the study. The population consisted of 505 business education graduated in the districts. Simple random sampling technique was used in the study. A 10 – item questionnaire developed by the researcher, tagged “acquisition of Entrepreneurial Skills and Employment Generation of Business Education Students Questionnaire” was validation by three experts in the department of Business Education. The reliability co-efficient value was 0.71. The data obtained were analyzed using Mean, Standard Deviation and Dependent T-test. The study concluded that while students exhibit moderate entrepreneurial knowledge, practical skill acquisition remains low, limiting their readiness to start businesses. Recommendations include improving practical entrepreneurship training and stronger university-industry partnerships by setting up workshops and simulated business environments, Entrepreneurship skills should be integrated across all levels of Business Education and ICT provides skills in business intelligence on employment generation of business education students to a greater extent.

Keywords: Entrepreneurial skills, employment generation, business education, skill acquisition

Introduction

Entrepreneurship skills has become increasingly important in an era of economic uncertainties, as it aims at equipping students with the skills and mindset necessary to navigate the ever-changing business landscape. It also teaches students how to adapt to uncertainty and overcome challenges; by learning to think creatively, take calculated risks, and the students becomes more resilient and better equipped to handle the uncertainties of entrepreneurship. In an era of rapid change and constant disruption, entrepreneurship skills helps students develop the ability to turn and adjust to new circumstances, making them more adaptable and better prepared for success. Entrepreneurship skills also encourages students to think outside the box, identify problems, and come up with innovative solutions. By fostering a culture of innovation, entrepreneurship education helps students develop the skills necessary to create new products, services, and business models that can help them thrive in an uncertain environment. In an era where traditional business models are being disrupted and new opportunities are emerging, entrepreneurship skills equips students with the ability to identify and capitalize on these opportunities, giving them a competitive edge in the marketplace. Entrepreneurship education teaches students how to identify problems, and come up with effective solutions.

These are valuable skills in any environment, but especially in uncertain times, where problems and challenges are constantly evolving. By learning to think critically and solve complex problems, students become more adept at navigating the uncertainties of entrepreneurship and identifying opportunities for growth and success. Entrepreneurship skills

also provide students with opportunities to connect with other entrepreneurs, mentors, and industry professionals. These connections can be invaluable in helping students navigate the uncertainties of entrepreneurship and providing them with valuable insights, advice, and support. By building a strong network of contacts, students can tap into a wealth of knowledge and experience, giving them a better understanding of the industry and helping them make informed decisions.

Entrepreneurship skills have become increasingly important in an era of uncertainties, as it equips students with the skills and mindset necessary to succeed as entrepreneurs. By learning to be adaptable, innovative, and resilient, students are better equipped to handle the challenges that lie ahead and to create their own opportunities in an uncertain world. Whether students interested in starting their own business or simply looking to develop valuable skills that can help them succeed in any environment, entrepreneurship education is an essential part of their educational journey or career.

Unemployment in Nigeria has grown at an alarming rate with its attendant in the negative impact on the economy. The figure of unemployment as estimated by Nkechi (2023) at 50% of employee population in Nigeria is alarming and calls for a concerted effort from government and all well-meaning Nigerians to fight the menace. With formal education such problems can be improved. This is because the acquisition of appropriate creative skills, abilities and competencies both mentally and physical qualifies an individual to live in and contribute to the development of the society and is one of the cardinal objectives of education as enunciated in the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004) education policy document. Skills acquisition ensures a self-reliant individual who can create or generate employment for self and others. Unemployment remains a significant issue in many developing countries, including Nigeria. Despite increased access to tertiary education, many graduates struggle to secure gainful employment. Business Education, by design, aims to equip students with the knowledge and skills for economic self-reliance. Entrepreneurial skill acquisition, therefore, is a key component for addressing unemployment and fostering job creation. However, there is growing concern that many Business Education graduates are inadequately equipped to function as entrepreneurs due to limited practical training.

Entrepreneurial skills are business skills which an individual acquires in the course of his or her exposure to education that enable them to function effectively in changing business environment as an entrepreneurial programme offer students the tools to think creatively and to be an effective solver. Entrepreneurship skills can be particularly effective in initial vocational training, as students are to enter working life and self-employment may be a valuable option for them. One of the methods adopted by government, through education to tackle unemployment has been the introduction of entrepreneurship development as a courses in tertiary institutions. This is because entrepreneurship education is an avenue for discovering knowledge, acquisition of human and skills that relevant for participatory development and change.

One of the skills-development training and programme that play the same role as Entrepreneurship Education is Business Education. According to Owolabi (2022), Business Education is a vocational subject historical intended to prepare student for success in business and world of work. In the 21th century, information and computer age, support the ability to meet the employment and poverty reduction needs of the graduates from the programme and become seriously questionable. There is a serious problem of unemployment and poverty among graduates of the subject from various levels of institution in the country. Business education therefore, is to rise up to helping in tacking this is challenge by equipping its students with entrepreneurial skills and competences through entrepreneurship education.

According to Atakpa (2021), entrepreneurship education is designed to inspire and guide potential entrepreneurs into the fields as well as improve upon current knowledge and ginger prospective entrepreneurs into action. With the inability of government to gainfully employ

every citizen, the need for creating employment by individuals increases by the day, just as the increase in the population of people in the employment market. Entrepreneurship could help in creating jobs and save the economy of various nations. According to Inegbenebour (2020), observed that unemployment among the school leavers will drastically reduce because they are equipped with entrepreneurial skills that will make them self-employed if not paid employed.

It may be disheartening to realize that Nigeria still imports toothpicks and handkerchiefs which do not require so much technology or technicality to produce. The nation has continued to be a consuming importing nation instead of a producing exporting one despite the abundant natural and human resources. Nkechi (2023) noted that Nigeria is still one of the poorest countries in the world and has one of the highest rate of unemployment.

Various investment areas are begging for investors who have the technical know-how to push forth. If people with little or no educational background have been able to break forth in some business, it is expected that those who receive formal education and those taught entrepreneurship should be the ones with a higher drive for business. Agbu (2021) identified some areas begging for investment in Nigeria to include manufacturing, sales and repairs of GSM accessories, film and home video production, engineering and fabrication works, building and construction as well as agricultural and agro allied activities. While the Federal Government of Nigeria as at November 2021 was organizing investors summit at the international level to woo investors from their countries to Nigeria, the home front is yet to be wake up to reality. The introduction of entrepreneurship education in Nigeria is set to tilt the balance in favour of private investment that will create more employment opportunities. This would help the graduate to understand what is enterprise is, what an entrepreneur does in economic development as well as develop the desire to take up entrepreneurship as a career.

According to Eni (2017), entrepreneurship education introduces students to recognize the role of enterprise, desire active and creative effort as the starting point for entrepreneurship. Equally Atakpa (2021) noted that entrepreneurship training aims at inculcating the right type of values and appropriate skills, abilities and competencies on the individual to contribute maximally to the growth of the Nigerian economy. The graduate of Business Education, through entrepreneurship education have been equipped with the skills and knowledge of identifying latent opportunities and taking advantages of them before some else gets to know.

Statement of the Problem

Business Education students in University of Uyo seem not to have been performance creditably well academically; hence, not played the expected vital and vibrant role in the acquisition of entrepreneurship skills. A terrible phenomenon described as the conglomerate of Business Education students with diverse background, willing and able to work, but cannot find any. Given the lack of insufficient employment opportunities in the formal sector, Business Education students may be compelled to engage in casual work and other unorthodox livelihood sources, thus leading to underemployment. Scholars and commentators have argued that as far as the formal sector is concerned, the average business education students do not possess the skills needed by the employers of labour for a formal employment and therefore, are not employable.

This situation of the entrepreneurship is more disturbing and worrisome when compared with what other developing and developed countries have been able to achieve with the existence of entrepreneurs.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to determine the extent to which the acquisition of entrepreneurship skills would influence employment generation of business education students.

Specifically, the study sought to examine:

1. assess the level of entrepreneurial skills acquired by business education students
2. examine the impact of entrepreneurial skills to which the acquisition of information and communication Technology (ICT) skills on employment generation of business education students

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised guide to the study.

1. What is the level of entrepreneurial skills acquired by Business Education students?
2. What is the level of ICT skills for employment generation among business education students?

Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at .05 level of significance.

H₀₁: There is no significant difference in the opinion of business education students regarding the levels of entrepreneurial skills acquisition and employment generation.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference in the opinion of business education students regarding the levels of ICT skills acquisition and employment generation.

Methodology

The correctional survey design was adopted for this study. This design is appropriate because it studies both large and small population by selecting and studying samples chosen from the population to discover the relative incidence distribution and interrelations of sociological and psychological variables.

A researcher-developed instrument called “A structured questionnaire titled Entrepreneurial Skills Acquisition and Employment Generation Questionnaire (ESA-EGQ) was used for data collection. It is designed to seek information from the respondents on the variables such as acquisition of entrepreneurial skills, Information Communication Technology (ICT) skills, marketing skills, creativity skills and resourcefulness skills and graduates employment generation. A to D. Section A requests for Business Education graduates personal data, such as gender and location. Section B to D is designed to elicit information on the main variables of the study. The response options for these sections are 4-point rating scale as follows: To a very Great Extent (VGE)-4 points, to a Great Extent (GE)-3 points, to some Extent (SE) -2 points, Not at all (NA)-1 point. The reliability co-efficient value was 0.71. The data obtained were analyzed using Mean, Standard Deviation and dependent t-test. Item with mean of 2.50 and above was accepted valid while those below 2.50 were rejected as invalid. If the calculated value is less than or equal to the critical value at .05 level of significance,

Result and Discussion

Research Question 1

1. What is the level of entrepreneurial skills acquired by Business Education students?

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation on the Level of Entrepreneurial Skills Acquired by Business Education Students.

S/N	Items	X	SD	REMARK
1.	Formulating the strategies to accomplish the target goals.	3.04	.88	Agree
2.	A successful business based on the identified opportunities	3.18	.81	Agree
3.	Entrepreneurial skills require ability to conduct personal evaluation and knowledge	3.09	.87	Agree
4.	Ability to cope with risk is an essential element of business.	3.20	.83	Agree
5.	Entrepreneur needs to take responsibility at all time	3.13	.74	Agree
	Average Score	3.13	.83	Agree

Table shows that the mean scores for items 1-5 are 3.04, 3.18, 3.09, 3.20 and 3.13 respectively. The average score for mean is 3.13 and that of standard deviation is .83. The results indicate that the mean value for each item and the average mean score are greater than the average rating point of 2.50. This implies that the level of entrepreneurial skills for employment generation is high among business education students to a greater extent.

Research Question 2: What is the level of ICT skills for employment generation among business education students?

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation on the Level of ICT Skills for Employment Generation among Business Education Students.

N= 202

S/N	Items	X	SD	REMARK
6.	The ICT help to generate better ideas on business	3.26	.79	Agree
7.	The use of ICT helps entrepreneur to forecast the available profit	3.07	1.01	Agree
8.	ICT enhances business education graduates' skills to determine changes in their performance	3.10	.94	Agree
9.	ICT facilitates wealth generation for the masses and tackle their poverty	3.12	.97	Agree
10.	A network specialist keeps people connected to an organizations' computer system	3.39	.74	Agree
	Average Score	3.19	.89	Agree

The result in table 2 reveals the mean scores for items 6-10 or 3.26, 3.07, 3.10, 3.12 and 3.39 respectively. The average score of the mean is 3.19 while that of standard deviation is .89. The results show that the mean value for each item and the average mean score are greater than the average cut-off point of 2.50. This indicates that the impact of entrepreneurial skills to which the acquisition of information and communication Technology (ICT) skills on employment generation of business education students to a greater extent.

Testing of Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1

There is no significant difference in the opinion of business education students regarding the levels of entrepreneurial skills acquisition and employment generation.

Table 3: Difference in the Opinion of Business Education Students Regarding the Levels of Entrepreneurial Skills Acquisition and Employment Generation.

Variable	$\bar{X}$	SD	df	t-cal	t-crit
Entrepreneurial skills	3.13	.83	200	3.06*	1.96
Employment generation	2.84	1.06			

n=202, *significant at .05 alpha level

Table shows the calculated t-value of 3.06 is greater than the critical t-value of 1.96 at df of 200 and 05 level of significance. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected. Therefore, there is no significant in the opinion of business education students regarding the levels of entrepreneurial skills acquisition and employment generation.

Hypothesis 2

There is no significant difference in the opinion of business education students regarding the levels of ICT skills acquisition and employment generation.

Table 4: t-test Analysis of entrepreneurial skills to which the acquisition of information and communication Technology (ICT) skills on employment generation of business education students

Variable	X	SD	df	t-cal	t-crit
ICT SKILLS	3.19	.89	200	3.59*	1.96
Employment generation	2.84	1.06			

*Significant at .05 alpha level

Data analysis in table 7 indicates that the calculated t-value of 3.59 is greater than the critical t-value of 1.96 at df of 200 and .05 level of significance. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected. Therefore, there is no significant difference in the opinion of business education students regarding the levels of ICT skills acquisition and employment generation.

Discussion

Acquisition of Entrepreneurial Skills and Employment Generation of Business Education Students

The Level of entrepreneurial skills or ICT skills will be either high or low. In support of the findings, Olise (2022) posited that in displaying proficiency in management of an enterprise, an entrepreneur should display managerial skills, accounting and financial competencies, marketing and selling skills and general business competencies. The entrepreneurial skills required by an entrepreneur involve the ability to communicate effectively, ability to make long and short term planning, ability to conduct personal evaluation and knowledge of good human relations among others. Entrepreneurial skill is very important before one could think of venturing into a business undertaking. The findings of the study go in line with that of Barret (2023) who noted that technical skill possessed by an entrepreneur enables him to organize materials and human resources, choose management style to adopt to suit his peculiar circumstances, build network of communication and monitor the environment very closely. Personal entrepreneurial skills involve inner control discipline, risk taking, innovation, change orientation, persistent visionary leadership and ability to manage change. Besides, the findings of the study also corroborate with that of Olise (2022) who affirmed that the essence of entrepreneurship education is to ensure

self-sustainability, employment generation, income generation, wealth creation and reduction in crime rate. Olise (2022) further stated that to attain these goals, business entrepreneurs should apply the management principles known as Strength Weakness Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis. In using SWOT, an enterprise could measure its strengths and weaknesses and identify opportunities available for exploitation and the probable threats to its successful operation. In addition to formal education, Hisrich and Peters (2020) emphasized the importance of previous experience as necessary equipment for success in entrepreneurship. Formal education and previous business experience give a potential entrepreneur the skills needed to form and manage a new enterprise.

Acquisition of ICT skills and Employment Generation of Business Education Students

The findings of the study revealed that there is a significant impact of the acquisition of ICT skills employment generation of Business Education students. In support of these findings, Odonwodu and Abdullahi (2021) observed that Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has the potential to power development and eradicate poverty and is a veritable weapon for promoting human development and accelerating economic growth. It is therefore important for Nigeria as a nation to achieve a sustainable socio-economic growth by deploying ICT to generate wealth for the masses and tackle poverty. Since ICT has become one of the most important channels through which a nation can impact on her citizens, there is no doubt that it can be used to drive sustainable development and eradicate poverty and unemployment. It has opened up business opportunities and become a veritable revenue generating tool for most disadvantaged people in Nigeria. Many people use the mobile phone to make calls and charge people for it. By this activity they generate income for sustenance. The findings also go in line with the works of Nkanga (2021) who observed that GSM operators have empowered several unemployed persons especially youth to own their own franchises where they operate a phone kiosk, sell recharge cards and render call service to generate income for their households. Apart from generating income for subsistence, ICT provides skills in business intelligence, knowledge management, customer relations management, supply chain management, cyber marketing, and enterprise resource planning. Also, from foregoing, it can be deduced that students of business education with specialty in Information and Communication Technology could generate employment, improve their living standard and reduce poverty by engaging in any of the activities discussed.

Conclusion

Based on the data analysis in the study, findings and discussions made: it was concluded that:

It was also conclude that entrepreneur needs a good manger like business education graduates endowed with great skills to achieve the organizational goals. An entrepreneur with a good business organization skill is the key person when it comes to positive development of the enterprise. However, to perform this task efficiently, the entrepreneur needs a set of good business skills and the best that these skills can be learned, developed and incorporated by any entrepreneur or any organization irrespective of its size and stream of the enterprise.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and the conclusions reached the following recommendations were made;

1. Universities should enhance practical entrepreneurship training by setting up workshops and simulated business environments
2. Entrepreneurship should be integrated across all levels of Business Education and ICT provides skills in business intelligence on employment generation of business education students to a greater extent.

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