

ENTREPRENEURIAL COMPETENCIES REQUIRED OF UNIVERSITY BUSINESS EDUCATION STUDENTS FOR ESTABLISHMENT OF SMALL-SCALE BUSINESS VENTURES IN ABIA STATE

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ABSTRACT

The study focussed on entrepreneurial competencies required of university Business Education students for establishment of small-scale business ventures in Abia State. Two research questions and two null hypotheses guided the study. Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. Population of the study comprised of 150 Business Education students from universities in Abia State. There was no sampling because the population of the study was manageable, thus; the use of the entire population. A structured questionnaire was developed by the researcher from extensive review of literatures which was titled "Entrepreneurial Competencies required by Business Education Students' Questionnaire" (ECRBESQ) was used for data collection. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions while t-test was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The findings showed that entrepreneurship competencies highly required of university Business Education students for establishment of small-scale business ventures in Abia State include behavioural and problem-solving competencies. Based on the findings, it was concluded that university Business Education students highly required entrepreneurial competencies to successfully establish and manage owned businesses on graduation. Based on the findings and conclusion, it was recommended among others that university business educators should adopt suitable strategies to ensure that their students adequately acquire behavioural and problem-solving competencies to enable them establish and effectively manage small-scale businesses to satisfy the needs of their customers in different aspects.

KEYWORDS: Entrepreneurship, small-scale business, behavioural competencies, problem solving competencies

Introduction

The global economic recession has made Nigeria face multidimensional, political, economic, and social problems giving rise to high rate of unemployment and poverty. One of such social problems Nigeria has today is over dependence on government for the creation of jobs which has led to unabated rising of graduate unemployment in the country. In recognition of this and to have a change of mind-set, the Nigerian governments have constantly pursued economic policies geared towards self-reliance and poverty alleviation, such as Social Investment Programme (SIP) and National Directorate of Employment (NDE) among others aimed at helping university students and graduates to acquire necessary skills and funds to become entrepreneurs (FRN, 2019). Furthermore, the federal government infused entrepreneurship into the curriculum of ~~our~~ tertiary educational institutions through the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) in collaboration with the Centre for Entrepreneurship and Development Research (CEDR) with the aim of making the populace managers of their own as well as to train and retrain potential graduates through entrepreneurship education (FRN, 2011). This is premised on the fact that when university Business Education students are adequately trained on entrepreneurial competencies in their respective areas of specialization, they will be able to establish and profitably run private small-scale business ventures as entrepreneurs.

Entrepreneurship according to Ekoh-Nweke (2017), is the acquisition of skills, ideas and managerial abilities necessary for personal self-reliance. Furthermore, she stated that entrepreneurship is simply concerned with what an entrepreneur actually does, the utilization of resources in managing an enterprise and assuming the risks and maximizing profit from the business ventures. Entrepreneurship is therefore about learning the skills needed to assume the risk bearing position of establishing a business, developing the winning strategies and executing them with all the vigour, persistence and passion needed to succeed in any venture (Ekoh-Nweke & Izuagba, 2018). The authors further described entrepreneurship as the willingness and ability to identify business opportunities through creativity and innovation and establishing necessary machinery to run business enterprise successfully.

The concept of the small-scale business venture is a relative one and it depends mainly on both the geographical location and the nature of economic activity being performed (Umar in Ugiagbe, 2018). A small-scale enterprise is a privately owned and operated business, characterized by a small number of employees and low turnover. A small-scale enterprise usually only shares a tiny segment of the market it operates in. Small scale business ventures are essential to the economy for industrial growth and diversification. Small scale business venture in the views of Osadi; Isike and Emogain Aniefuna (2023) is that business which is independently owned and managed by private individual to meet up their desired income and their employment needs. Small scale business ventures have crucial roles to play in the process of economic development especially in a capital scale economy like Nigeria (Mamman, in Ekoh-Nweke & Aniemeka, 2019).

Entrepreneurial competencies identification and development are important tools of human resource management targeted at achieving the strategic goals of the organization. As entrepreneurs and managers share similar roles and tasks in organizations, particularly in small businesses, therefore, researchers in the entrepreneurship field now borrow the concept and related theory of competency from the management literature (Kochadai, 2012). As a result of this, the competency approach has now become a popular means of studying entrepreneurship. Spencer and

Spence in Krishna (2013) defined entrepreneurial competency as an underlying characteristic of an individual that is usually related to effective and/or superior performance in a job or situation. Kaur and Bains (2013) described entrepreneurial competency “as the individual characteristics of a person who undertakes risk for gaining profit in the business venture”. Underlying characteristic means the competency is a fairly deep and enduring part of a person's personality and can predict behaviour in a wide variety of situations and job tasks.

Behavioural competencies are knowledge, skills, abilities or any other characteristic that contributes to the entrepreneurs' success in performing their identified duties and areas of responsibility. These competencies can be directly observed and measured by others. Many of these behavioural competencies are social in nature. They are concerned with how well you can get along with other people, including your supervisor, your colleagues, customers, and clients. According to Virtanen in Aniefuna(2023), any behaviour attribute such as knowledge, skill set, teamwork, leadership skills and technical know-how, which contributes to the development of an individual in the organisation to take up bigger roles is known as 'behavioural competency'. It can be applied to individuals at all levels, which simply means that it is not restricted to just top, middle, or lower level. Behavioural competency is used to enhance the competency of employees at all the positions in the organisation for smoother transition of workflow (Wagenaar, 2013). A behavioural competency framework enables the organisation to clarify expectations and identify standards of performance at every organizational level. The researcher observed that behavioural competencies could potentially aid in problem solving.

The problem solving consists of the removal of the conflict and the finding of the desired object and a disorder in the objective situation or in the structure of an activity and subjective uncertainty that causes activating tension and motivating focus. Problem solving according to Buenoand (2014) is a summary of the cognitive processes focused on the change of the given state to the final state where the solution procedure is not obvious. Problem-solving competency help student to determine the source of a problem and find an effective solution. Cai and Lester in Aniefuna(2023) mentioned some key problem-solving competencies which include: active listening, analysis, research, creativity, communication, dependability, decision making and team-building. Problem-solving competencies are important in every career at every level. And as a result, effective problem solving may also require job-specific technical skills which could aid in personal competencies. This term is in the fields of education similarly understood by a Polish scientist, who defines a didactic problem as a practical or theoretical difficulty that a pupil has to solve independently by his own active research (Novick & Bassok, 2015). Similarly, Ezeani, Ifeonyemetalu and Ezemoyih (2012) carried out a study on the problem competencies required by Business related graduates for successful operation of a business enterprises and discovered among others that up to nine problem-solving competencies are highly required by the business-related graduates for successful operation of business ventures.

Statement of the Problem

The development of entrepreneurial competencies has been a powerful engine of economic growth and wealth creation, and is crucial for improving the quality, number and variety of employment opportunities for the graduates. It has several multiplier effects on the economy, spurs innovation, and fosters investment in people which is a better source of advantage than other natural resources, which can be depleted. Development of entrepreneurial competencies in university Business Education students will enable them to create new enterprises, new commercial activities, and new economic sectors. They will generate jobs for others, produce goods and services for the society,

introduce new technologies, improve or lower cost outputs, and earn foreign exchange through export expansion or substitution of imports. This can lead to economic development and the advancement of private enterprises.

Unfortunately, university Business Education students are not well equipped with saleable entrepreneurship competencies due to epileptic teaching and learning where no equipment is being provided for teachers to teach and for student to work with, university Business Education students are not functional in the society and their homes as expected of them. Hence, the question: to what extent does entrepreneurial competencies required of university Business Education students enhance in establishment of small-scale business ventures in South East Nigeria?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine the entrepreneurial competencies required of university Business Education students for establishment of small-scale ventures in Abia State. Specifically, this study determined the level at which;

1. behavioural competencies are required of university Business Education students for establishing small scale business ventures.
2. problem solving competencies are required of university Business Education students for establishing small-scale business ventures.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the level at which behavioural competencies are required of university Business Education students for establishing small scale business ventures in Abia State?
2. What is the level at which problem-solving competencies are required of university Business Education students for establishing small scale business ventures in Abia State?

Hypotheses

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

H₀₁, There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female university Business Education students on the level at which behavioural competencies are required of them for establishing small-scale business ventures in Abia State.

H₀₂, There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female university Business Education students on the level at which problem-solving competencies are required of them for establishing small-scale business ventures in Abia State.

Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design since it was meant to collect and analyze data from a few people or entire group to explore their opinions by the use of a questionnaire. The study was carried out in two universities offering Business Education in Abia State. The population for the study consists of 150 male and female students who study Business Education in two universities in Abia State. The researchers sampled the entire population and there was no sampling technique adopted because the population size was manageable. A structured questionnaire was

developed by the researchers from extensive review of literatures which was titled “Entrepreneurial Competencies Required of Business Education Students' Questionnaire” (ECRBESQ). The questionnaire items have 4-point rating scale response categories of Highly Required (RA), Required (R), Fairly Required (FR) and Not Required (NR). Three research assistants who were briefed on the modalities helped in the administration of the instrument. Out of 170 copies administered, 150 were retrieved. Mean was used to answer the two research questions while standard deviations was used to determine the closeness of their responses. Decision on the research questions was based on the grand mean in relation to real limits of numbers on a 4-point scale as follows: 3.50 – 4.00 highly required; 2.50 – 3.49 required; 1.50 – 2.49 fairly required and 1.00 – 1.49 not required. The t-test statistics was used to test the two null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance at appropriate degree of freedom, also the null hypothesis was significant where the probability value was less than the 0.05 significant levels at appropriate degree of freedom otherwise the null hypothesis was not significant.

Results and Analysis

The data used for answering Research Question 1 is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Respondents' mean ratings on the level at which behavioural competencies are required of university Business Education students for establishment of small-scale business ventures

S/N.	Item Statement	\bar{X}	SD	Remarks
1.	Being very creative and innovative	4.00	0.49	HR
2.	Demonstrating high level of persistence in the face of uncertainty	3.55	0.48	HR
3.	Showing perseverance at odd situations	3.50	0.49	HR
4.	Having high sense of judgment	3.53	0.45	HR
5.	Demonstrating high level of openness	3.52	0.89	HR
6.	Demonstrating high sense of integrity	3.60	0.75	HR
7.	Having a visionary leadership quality	3.58	0.69	HR
Grand Mean		3.61	0.61	HR

Table 1 shows that the mean ratings of five of the seven behavioural competencies are above 3.50 which means that they are highly required while the rest had above 2.50 which means that they are required. However, the grand mean score of 3.61 shows that the respondents rated behavioural competencies as highly required by university Business Education students for establishing small-scale business ventures.

The data for testing null hypothesis 1 was presented in Table 2.

Table 2: The t – test Analysis of the Mean Ratings of the Responses of male and female university Business Education students on the level at which behavioural

competencies are required of them for establishing small scale business ventures

Status	N	\bar{X}	SD	DF	t-cal	P-V	Decision
Male	50	3.60	0.54	148	0.81	1.96	NS
Female	100	3.50	0.59				

Data presented in Table 2 showed that 6 out of 7 male and female Business Education University Students on the behavioural competencies required for establishing small scale business ventures had their calculated t-value ranged to 0.81 which was less than t-table value of 1.96 at $p \leq 0.05$ level of significance and at 148 degrees of freedom (df). This showed that there was no significant difference in the mean ratings of the responses of university Business Education students on the level at which behavioural competencies are required of them for establishing small scale business ventures. Therefore, the null hypothesis of no significant was accepted

The data for answering the Research Question 2 is presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Respondents' mean ratings on the level at which problem-solving competencies are required of university Business Education students for establishment of small-scale business ventures

S/N	Item Statements	X	SD	Remarks
8	Acquiring the necessary mind-set which will help to understand that the problems are part of the process and start working on the problems.	3.52	0.67	HR
9	Having basic understanding of the phenomenon that normally cause problems always.	3.56	0.83	HR
10	Clear understanding of the fact that every problem has a solution which must be sought for.	3.58	0.78	HR
11	Having the ability to choose the relevant contextual and pragmatic solution for a problem.	3.59	0.64	HR
12	Exploring the alternate strategies till the solutions for the imminent problems are found.	3.76	0.77	HR
13	Generating new ideas, product, services, visions so that the similar problems do not occur in future.	3.63	0.54	HR
14	Looking for resources that would help to solve the problems in an amiable way	3.52	0.50	HR
Grand Mean		3.59	0.68	HR

Data presented in Table 3 revealed that the mean ratings of the responses of the respondents on 7 items had mean values of 3.52 which are within the real limit of 3.50 – 4.00. The results indicated that the respondents agreed that all the 7 identified items of problem solving are highly required. However, the grand mean score of 3.59 shows that the respondents rated problem-solving competencies of university Business Education students highly required for establishment of

small-scale business ventures.

Table 4: t – test Analysis of the Mean Ratings of the Responses on the level at which Problem-solving competencies are required by Business Education University Students for establishing small-scale business ventures

Status	N	\bar{X}	SD	DF	t-cal	P-V	Decision
Male	50	3.79	0.54	148	1.42	1.96	NS
Female	100	3.70	0.59				

Data presented in Table 4 showed that 7 items on Problem solving competencies required of university Business Education students for establishment of small-scale business ventures had their calculated t-values ranged from 1.42 which was less than t-table value of 1.96 at $p \leq 0.05$ level of significance and at 148 degrees of freedom (df). This showed that there was no significant difference in the mean ratings of the responses of university Business Education students on the 7 items on problem-solving competencies. Therefore, the null was accepted.

Discussion

The findings of this study were discussed under the following sub-headings in line with the research questions and hypotheses:

Level at which Behavioural competencies are required of university Business Education students for establishment of small-scale business ventures

Finding of the study revealed that behaviour competencies are highly required of university Business Education students for establishment of small-scale business venture. The above findings of this study agreed with Virtanen in Aniefuna(2023) which state that any behaviour attribute such as knowledge, skill set, teamwork, leadership skills and technical know-how, which contributes to the development of an individual in the organisation to take up bigger roles is known as 'behavioural competency. Similarly, Wagenaar, (2013) asserted that it can be applied to individuals at all levels, which simply means that it is not restricted to just top, middle, or lower level. Behavioural competency is used to enhance the competency of employees at all the positions in the organisation for smoother transition of workflow. The result further showed that there was no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female Business Education University Students on the behavioural competencies required for establishing small scale business ventures. The results agreed with Wagnaar (2013) who opined that behavioural competency is used to enhance the competency of employees at all the positions in the organisation for smoother transaction of workflow.

Level at which Problem Solving Competencies are required of university Business Education students for establishment of small-scale business ventures

The findings of this study in respect to research question two revealed that the 7 identified items of problem solving are highly required of university Business Education students for establishment of

small-scale business ventures. The findings of this study on problem-solving competencies required of them is in conformity with Cai and Lester in Aniefuna(2023) which maintained that some key problem-solving competencies which include: active listening, analysis, research, creativity, communication, dependability, decision making and team-building are important in every career at every level. And as a result, effective problem solving may also require job-specific technical skills which could aid in personal competencies. In agreement, Novick and Bassok (2015) asserted that this term in the fields of education is similarly understood by a Polish scientist, who defines a didactic problem as a practical or theoretical difficulty that a pupil has to solve independently by his own active research.

This indicates that for university Business Education students to effectively and efficiently establish a viable business, problem-solving competencies must be acquired at a high level. The results further showed that there was no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female Business Education University students on the problem-solving competencies required for establishing small scale business ventures. The results agreed with Ezeani, Ifeonyemetalu and Ezemoyih (2012) who carried out a study on the problem competencies required by Business related graduates for successful operation of a business enterprises and discovered among others that up to nine problem-solving competencies are highly required by the business-related graduates for successful operation of business ventures.

Conclusion

Based on the findings it was concluded that most of the university Business Education students who venture into private business due to lack of job fail due to poor and inadequate entrepreneurial competencies especially on behavioural and problem-solving competencies to establish and manage a business venture. In the same vein, the study concludes that university Business Education students highly required entrepreneurial competencies to successfully establish and manage owned businesses on graduation.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions drawn from the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. The Business Education lecturers should impart relevant and meaningful entrepreneurship competencies on their students to enable them function and contribute their quota in the society.
2. The governments should help package the identified entrepreneurial competencies into teachable programmes for training university Business Education students to enable them establish viable businesses and as well for entrepreneurship development in the Nigerian economy.
3. The university Business Education students should put more effort and interest in acquiring behavioural and problem-solving competencies to enable them fit into the business world and thrive successfully.

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