

STRATEGIES FOR PROMOTING ENTREPRENEURIAL SKILLS ACQUISITION AMONG FEMALE BUSINESS EDUCATION STUDENTS FOR EMPOWERMENT IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN SOUTH EAST NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This research work dwelt on strategies for promoting entrepreneurial skills acquisition among female business education students for empowerment in tertiary institutions in South East Nigeria. Descriptive survey research design was used for the study. The population for the study comprised of 75 Business Educators in tertiary institutions offering Business Education. The entire population was used hence, no sampling was done. Two research questions and two null hypotheses guided the study. Self-structured questionnaire was the instrument for data collection. The instrument was subjected to reliability test and a co-efficient of 0.87 was obtained using Cronbach Alpha. 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 indicated that Business Educators agreed with all the items enumerated as government-related and lecturers-related strategies for promoting entrepreneurial skills acquisition among female business education students for empowerment in tertiary institutions. Based on the findings, it was recommended among others that business educators in tertiary institutions should device ways to ensure that students are provided with data and materials necessary for entrepreneurial skills acquisition.

KEYWORDS: Entrepreneurial skills, Empowerment, Business Education

Introduction

Unemployment is seen as epidemic ravaging the whole corners of Nigeria. Unemployment is a situation where people have the ability and are willing to work but do not have the work to do. Yusuf and Buhari (2017) refers to unemployed people as people who have the willingness and ability to work but the job is not there for them. The inability to get young people employed creates sense of vulnerability, idleness and attraction of illegal activities. The remedy to such deplorable situation is to equip the youths especially the females with requisite skills needed for them to make positive changes, be self-employed, better their living and help develop the economy. This is made possible through functional education. The Nigerian nation needs an educational system which impacts the relevant skills, knowledge, capacities, attitudes and values for wealth creation, poverty reduction for value re-orientation and empowerment. Agu (2016) opined that Education remains a vital transformational tool and formidable instrument for socio-economic empowerment, wealth creations, employment generation, poverty alleviation and value re-orientation. This kind of educational system can only be achieved through Business Education programme in Nigeria universities.

Business Education is an educational programme that embraces basic education for teaching career, entrepreneurship, business understanding, office environment and vocational practices. According to Ekoh-Nweke (2017), Business Education is an aspect of Vocational Education which equips individuals with the necessary skills and theoretical knowledge needed for performance in the business world either for job occupations or for self-employment. Business Education equip its recipients with personal skills, consumer skill and knowledge for clerical and managerial abilities needed to create wealth and jobs rather than wealth and job seekers. Business Education is comprehensive, practical and skills-oriented programme. Ogben and Amachi in Eyen (2021) maintained that they equip students with knowledge and skills that help them to find a job after schooling or create their own employment.

The Nigerian government deem it necessary to proffer solution to unemployment which has been a major challenge to the government by introducing Entrepreneurship Education in our institutions of higher learning. Entrepreneurship education is therefore a programme aimed at training individuals on how to acquire skills and knowledge in order to apply available resources to start business and make success. Ekoh-Nweke, Mkpa and Ezeabii (2020) defined entrepreneurship education as a systematic, conscious and goal-oriented process, through which non entrepreneur individuals who have the necessary potentials are creatively trained. Entrepreneurship is seen as a tool for skills acquisition and job creation in any nation. Entrepreneurial skills are competencies and abilities which enables one to succeed as an entrepreneur. Entrepreneurial skills are best understood as competency on resourceful skills capable of steering an individual to be self-reliant, independent and productive in meeting life's challenges (Ekoh-Nweke & Offia 2017). Two things are necessary in developing entrepreneurial skills: the ability to produce and the ability to distribute. From this identification, the ability to produce involves acquiring productive entrepreneurial skills which enable one to produce goods and services while the ability to distribute includes acquiring entrepreneurial skills that enable one to market and distribute the goods thus produced. Okonkwo (2014) suggested that establishing an enterprise college or skill acquisition center for students would help promote the acquisition of entrepreneurship skills and competencies. Okonkwo noted that skill acquisition centers would help develop such skills as business management skills, work-based knowledge, innovative skills, creative skills, motivational skills, technical skills, personal entrepreneurial skills, accountability skills and administrative skills, proper inter-personal and

communicative skills. Ezeabii, Ekoh-Nweke and Agbo (2020) defined entrepreneurship skills as those human attributes and dexterity used for establishment, management and controlling of investment opportunities for economic gain.

In every human activity, there are ways, strategies and procedures to execute those things. In line with this, strategy simply means ways, tactics, procedures and methods of getting a task done effectively and efficiently. It could be a plan of action designed to achieve a long-term or overall aim. Ekoh-Nweke and Izuagba (2019) advocated that strategy entails skills in managing an affair or matter in hand, and tactics for achieving an objective. Strategy is an action that managers take to attain one or more of the organization's goals. Strategy can also be defined as “a general direction set for the company and its various components to achieve a desired state in the future. Strategy results from the detailed strategic planning process”. A strategy is all about integrating organizational activities and utilizing and allocating the scarce resources within the organizational environment so as to meet the present objectives. Strategy in this context refers to as the method, ways, techniques, activities, behaviours adopted by government and business educators in promoting entrepreneurial skills acquisition in tertiary institutions (Obiote, Nwozor & Mbah in Eye, 2020). Business Education programme and entrepreneurial skills acquisition has to be promoted by all stakeholders by their being actively involved in playing their parts very well. The stakeholders include the government, the institutions administration, the lecturers, the students themselves and the community the institutions are situated in. With respect to this study, the government and lecturers as stakeholders were discussed.

Empowerment simply connotes equipping someone with things that will help her function and be self-reliant in the society. It could be money; it could be skills and it could be materials. The empowerment we are talking of here is “Skills”, viable skills that will make one outstanding in the society, employer of labour, self-reliant and financially relevant. Empowerment is also authority or power given to someone to do something. It means when individuals are given empowerment to create their own dwellings (Perkins, in Ekoh-Nweke & Aniemeka, 2023). Empowerment could be defined as the process of becoming stronger and more confident, especially in controlling one's life and claiming one's rights particularly women. Empowerment is the degree of autonomy and self-determination in people and in communities. This enables them to represent their interests in a responsible and self-determined way, acting on their own authority. Empowerment has been defined and measured in many different ways. Aside from the many politicians and others who use it without defining it at all, this is perhaps the greatest problem with the concept. Empowerment has been defined as an intentional ongoing process centered in the local community, involving mutual respect, critical reflection, caring, and group participation, through which people lacking an equal share of valued resources gain greater access to and control over those resources; or a process by which people gain control over their lives, democratic participation in the life of their community, and a critical understanding of their environment. The common elements in those definitions are that empowerment (1) is a process, (2) occurs in communities (organizations, schools inclusive), (3) involves active participation, (4) critical reflection, awareness and understanding (that is; consciousness raising about the influence of powerful political and economic structures and interests), and (5--most difficult but important of all, access to, and control over, important decisions and resources (Ekoh-Nweke & Aniemeka, 2023).

Similarly, Ekoh-Nweke, et al (2023) described empowerment as a “social action process that promotes participation of people, organizations, and communities in gaining control over their lives

in their community and larger societies”. Empowerment means- having control, or gaining further control; having a say and being listened to; being able to define and create from a women's perspective; being able to influence social choices and decisions affecting the whole society (not just areas of society accepted as women's place) being recognized and respected as equal citizens and human beings with a contribution to make. Empowerment is about positive changing and redistributing the balance of power in a given society, power being defined as control over resources and ideology. The resources may be categorized into physical, human, intellectual, financial, and self, including self-esteem, confidence, and creativity. Ideology refers to beliefs, values, attitudes, and ways of thinking and perceiving situations. So, empowerment is a process of awareness and capacity building leading to greater participation, to greater decision-making power and control, and to transformative action (Stein; Griffen; Batiwala; in Mahbub, 2021).

The Nigerian government as a stakeholder through appropriate agencies is meant to enforce the implementation of the policies with respect to entrepreneurship in tertiary institution. The government is to provide the fund needed for the implementation as entrepreneurship is capital intensive. Also, the government is to make provisions for training of lecturers on practical entrepreneurial skills, provide facilities and employ technical assistants needed by tertiary institutions for entrepreneurship education. To buttress the above, Olaitan (2017) opined that proper funding is very essential if the goals and objectives of entrepreneurship education are to be achieved. Quality and relevant equipment should be acquired and there is need for proper monitoring and adequate maintenance of such equipment. The government is to provide incentives to lecturers and students to motivate them. Also, entrepreneurial mindsets can be awakened in the students and lecturers alike when the government provide school-based enterprises which will help entrepreneurial attributes to them. According to Kehinde (2019), government is expected to establish students' enterprise centres for the students at all levels of education to provide business advice, mentorship and other practical support towards the realization of self-employment aspirations of the students.

Further, the objectives of entrepreneurship cannot be achieved in tertiary institutions for students' skills acquisition towards empowerment if the lecturers who are also stakeholders do not play their part very well. Most of these lecturers are Business Educators who have degrees and Post-graduate degrees in Business Education yet it seems nothing is being done as regards to meaningful instructional delivery in this aspect. It is expected that these lecturers combine teaching methods and use more of students centered interactive approach to teach for conceptualization of facts by students. They should try and cover the curriculum set for them and provide adequate practical experiences for the students. Obayi Anosike and Ezeji (2019) opined that for teaching entrepreneurship, teachers should use learner-centered teaching methods that are activity-based. Business educators are to promote active participation of all learners so as to enhance acquisition of entrepreneurial skills for job and wealth creation. In essence, lecturers ought to ensure that students are provided with the right data and materials necessary to focus their thinking and interaction in the lesson for the process of information analysis. From the foregoing, mentoring and monitoring of the students learning experiences to checkmate the achievement of the set objectives are expected of the lecturers. Nevertheless, the lecturers cannot achieve the above if they are not trained and retrained. Hence, they need to avail themselves for conferences, workshops and seminars towards capacity building. Owaji, Dambo and Owaji (2017) affirmed that for achievement of entrepreneurship education, teacher training and retraining packages should be provided and university authorities should endeavour to organize workshops and in-service training programmes

for Business Educators.

Despite all these inevitable necessities for the acquisition of entrepreneurial skills it has been observed that there is a mis-match between the education acquired among female business education students and display of competency. Hence, some of them roam about the streets in search of white-collar jobs. Ezeabii (2017) observed that some business education graduates especially female ones join other graduates in roaming about the streets looking for paid employment. This ugly situation could be as a result of not equipping and preparing the female business education students with viable skills particularly entrepreneurship skills. Upon this backdrop, this study to ascertain the strategies for promoting entrepreneurial skills acquisition among female business education students for empowerment in tertiary institutions in South East.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine strategies for promoting entrepreneurial skills acquisition of female business education students for empowerment in tertiary institutions in South East Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to determine the:

1. government-related strategies for promoting entrepreneurial skills acquisition of female students for empowerment through Business Education programme of public Universities.
2. lecturers-related strategies for promoting entrepreneurial skills acquisition of female students for empowerment through Business Education programme of public Universities.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study.

1. What are the government-related strategies for promoting entrepreneurial skills acquisition among female business education students for empowerment in tertiary institutions?
2. What are the lecturers-related strategies for promoting entrepreneurial skills acquisition among female business education students for empowerment in tertiary institutions?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses tested at 0.05 level of significance guided the study:

- Ho₁: There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of Business Educators in Universities and those of Colleges of Education on government- related strategies for promoting entrepreneurial skills acquisition among female business education students for empowerment in tertiary institutions.
- Ho₂: There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of Business Educators in Universities and those of Colleges of Education on government- related strategies for promoting entrepreneurial skills acquisition among female business education students for empowerment in tertiary institutions.

Method

A descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. The area of the study was South East, Nigeria. The population of the study comprised of 62 Business Educators in tertiary institutions in South East Nigeria. The entire population was used for the study since the population is manageable. The researchers developed instrument titled “Strategies for promoting entrepreneurial skills acquisition for empowerment among female business education students (SPESAEFBES)

was used for data collection. The questionnaire has two sections; A and B. Section A was on respondent's personal data. Section B has two clusters containing 20 items which sought information on each of the two research questions. The items were structured on a 4-point rating scale response style of Strongly agreed, Agreed, Disagreed and Strongly disagreed, weighted 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively. The instrument was face validated by three validates. The reliability of the instrument was ascertained using Cronbach Alpha and it yielded reliability co-efficient of 0.88 and 0.86 for clusters one and two respectively and the overall coefficient of the entire instrument was 0.87. The researchers with the help of three briefed research assistants collected data for the study. Sixty-two copies of questionnaire were collected and used for data analysis. Mean and standard deviation were used in answering the research questions. Items that scored 2.50 or above were accepted while those that scored below 2.50 were rejected. t-test was used in testing the two null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The hypothesis was accepted where significant p-value was greater than alpha value of 0.05 level of significance otherwise the null hypothesis was rejected.

Results

Research Question 1

What are government –related strategies for promoting entrepreneurial skills acquisition among female business education students for empowerment in tertiary institutions in South East?

Table 1: Mean ratings and standard deviations on government-related strategies for promoting entrepreneurial skills acquisition among female business education students forempowerment tertiary institutions.

S/NO	Government related strategies for promoting entrepreneurial skills acquisition include:	Universities n=25		Colleges of Education n= 32		Aggregate Scores n= 57		Decision
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	G	SDG	
1	Strategy is to provide the fund needed for promotion of entrepreneurship skills acquisition	2.88	1.05	3.31	0.95	3.12	0.98	Agree
2	Government strategy is to provide quality and relevant equipment for entrepreneurship skills acquisition.	2.88	1.17	3.25	1.02	3.09	1.09	Agree
3	Strategy is to make proper provisions and establishment of school-based enterprises for business advice, mentorship, other practical supports towards acquisition of entrepreneurial skills.	2.72	1.06	3.31	1.00	3.05	1.06	Agree
4	Strategy is to provide incentives to lecturers to motivate them for entrepreneurship skills impartation in students	2.56	0.87	2.50	1.11	2.53	1.00	Agree
5	Government strategy is to enforce the implementation of the policies with respect to entrepreneurship in tertiary institutions	3.12	1.17	2.97	1.15	3.04	1.15	Agree
6	To train and retrain lecturers towards entrepreneurship skills acquisition through workshops and seminars.	2.60	1.00	2.66	1.10	2.63	1.05	Agree
7	To employ and post technical assistants for entrepreneurial programme in tertiary institutions.	3.20	1.12	3.12	1.07	3.16	1.08	Agree
8	To ensure proper monitoring and maintenance of entrepreneurship equipment in tertiary institutions.	2.76	1.05	2.66	0.92	2.70	1.00	Agree
9	To supply tertiary institutions libraries with current entrepreneurial textbooks with local background.	2.88	1.09	2.69	1.12	2.77	1.10	Agree
10	To incorporate in the entrepreneurial curriculum of tertiary institutions that students should acquire entrepreneurial skills in particular vocational area on graduation.	2.80	1.04	2.41	1.27	2.58	1.18	Agree
Grand Mean and Standard Deviation		2.84	1.06	2.89	1.07	2.87	1.07	agree

A descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. The area of the study was South East, Nigeria. The population of the study comprised of 62 Business Educators in tertiary institutions in South East Nigeria. The entire population was used for the study since the population is manageable. The researchers developed instrument titled “Strategies for promoting entrepreneurial skills acquisition for empowerment among female business education students (SPESAEBES) was used for data collection. The questionnaire has two sections; A and B. Section A was on respondent's personal data. Section B has two clusters containing 20 items which sought information on each of the two research questions. The items were structured on a 4-point rating scale response style of Strongly agreed, Agreed, Disagreed and Strongly disagreed, weighted 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively. The instrument was face validated by three validates. The reliability of the instrument was ascertained using Cronbach Alpha and it yielded reliability co-efficient of 0.88 and 0.86 for clusters one and two respectively and the overall coefficient of the entire instrument was 0.87. The researchers with the help of three briefed research assistants collected data for the study. Sixty-two copies of questionnaire were collected and used for data analysis. Mean and standard deviation were used in answering the research questions. Items that scored 2.50 or above were accepted while those that scored below 2.50 were rejected. t-test was used in testing the two null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The hypothesis was accepted where significant p-value was greater than alpha value of 0.05 level of significance otherwise the null hypothesis was rejected.

Results

Research Question 1

What are government –related strategies for promoting entrepreneurial skills acquisition among female business education students for empowerment in tertiary institutions in South East?

Table 1: Mean ratings and standard deviations on government-related strategies for promoting entrepreneurial skills acquisition among female business education students forempowerment tertiary institutions.

Result on Table 1 indicates that the respondents agreed with items 1-10 with aggregate mean ranging from 2.53 to 3.16 as government related strategies for promoting entrepreneurial skills acquisition among female business education students for empowerment in tertiary institutions in South East. The cluster aggregate mean of 2.87 confirms that. Also, the aggregate standard deviations ranged from 0.98 – 1.18 with a cluster standard deviation of 1.07. This depicts homogenous opinion of the respondents.

Null Hypothesis 1

There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of business educators in universities and those in Colleges of Education on government-related strategies for promoting entrepreneurial skills acquisition among female business education students for empowerment in tertiary institutions.

Table 2: t-test analysis on the mean scores of business educators in universities and Colleges of Education on government-related strategies for promoting entrepreneurial skills acquisition among female business education students for empowerment intertiary institutions in South East

Group	N	Mean	SD	T	Df	Sig	Decision
Universities	25	2.84	1.06	0.52	55	0.604	NS
Colleges of Education	32	2.89	1.11				

From the SPSS output on Table 2, the P value is greater than the significant level ($0.604 > 0.05$). The null hypothesis is not rejected. Therefore, there is no significant difference between the mean ratings of business educators in universities and those in colleges of education on government-related strategies for promoting entrepreneurial skills acquisition among female business education students for empowerment in tertiary institutions in South East.

Research Question 2

What are the lecturers-related strategies for promoting entrepreneurial skills acquisition amongbusiness education students for empowerment in tertiary institutions in South East?

Table 3: Mean ratings and standard deviations on lecturers-related strategies for Promotingentrepreneurial skills acquisition among femalebusiness education students forempowerment in tertiary institutions in South East

S/NO	Lecturers-related strategies for promoting entrepreneurial skills acquisition include:	Universities n =25		Colleges of Education n = 32		Aggregate Scores n = 57		
			SD		SD	G	SDG	Decision
11	Ability to provide students with data and materials necessary to focus their thinking and interactions in the class	2.32	1.15	2.16	0.95	2.23	1.04	Disagree
12	Ability to use learner-centered teaching methods in teaching for conceptualization of facts.	3.00	1.00	3.19	0.97	3.11	0.98	disagree
13	Ability to arouse the interest of the students in the class	2.64	1.00	2.63	1.01	2.63	0.99	Agree
14	Ability to enforce that students attend teaching and practical sessions	3.16	1.03	3.19	1.06	3.18	1.04	Agree
15	Ability to try and cover the entrepreneurship curriculum before end of semester	2.76	1.13	2.53	1.19	2.63	1.16	Agree
16	Ability to give students adequate analytical and practical assignments	3.16	0.99	2.94	1.13	3.04	1.07	Agree
17	Ability to liaise with government and private establishments for students to visit and acquire entrepreneurial skills	3.08	0.91	3.13	0.94	3.11	0.92	Agree

18	Ability to mentor the students in entrepreneurial skills	2.48	1.23	2.72	1.02	2.61	1.11	Agree
19	Ability to avail themselves for knowledge in entrepreneurial skills through seminars and workshops.	2.56	1.12	2.97	1.15	2.79	1.15	Agree
20	Ability to monitor the student learning experiences in entrepreneurship programme to checkmate the achievement of set objectives	2.96	1.10	2.28	1.11	2.58	1.15	Agree
Grand Mean and Standard Deviation		2.81	1.06	2.77	1.05	2.79	1.06	Agree

The result on Table 3 indicates that respondents agreed with items 11-20 with aggregate mean ranging from 2.58 to 3.18 as lecturers related strategies for promoting entrepreneurial skills acquisition among female business education students for empowerment in tertiary institutions in South East. The respondents disagreed with item 11 with mean score of 2.23. However, the cluster mean of 2.79 indicates agreed. The standard deviations range from 0.92 to 1.16 indicating that the opinions of the respondents are not divergent.

Null Hypothesis 2

A significant difference does not exist between the mean ratings of business educators in universities and those of colleges of education on lecturers-related strategies for promoting entrepreneurial skills acquisition among female business education students for empowerment in tertiary institutions in South East.

Table 4: t-test analysis on the mean scores of business educators in universities and Colleges of education on lecturers-related strategies for promoting entrepreneurship skills acquisition among female business education students for empowerment in tertiary institutions in South East

Group	N	Mean	SD	t	df	Sig	Decision
Universities	25	2.81	1.09	0.32	55	0.748	NS
Colleges of Education	32	2.77	1.10				

From the SPSS output on Table 4, the p value is greater than the significant level ($0.748 > 0.05$). The null hypothesis is not rejected. Therefore, a significant difference does not exist between the mean ratings of Business Educators in universities and those of colleges of education on lecturers-related strategies for promoting entrepreneurial skills acquisition among female business education students for empowerment in tertiary institutions in South East.

Discussion of Findings

From the findings of research question one, it was discovered that the government strategy for promoting entrepreneurial skills acquisition among female business education students for empowerment in tertiary institutions, government is to provide fund needed for implementation,

provide quality and relevant equipment, make proper provisions and establishment of school-based enterprises for business advice and provide incentives to lecturers to motivate them among others. These are in agreement with Olaitan (2017) who opined that proper funding is very essential if the goals and objectives of entrepreneurship education are to be achieved. Also, it concurs with the observations of Kehinde (2019) that government should establish student's enterprise centers for the students at all levels of education to provide business advice, mentorship and other practical support towards the realization of self-employment aspirations of the students.

Subsequently, the findings of research question two revealed that lecturers strategy in promoting entrepreneurial skills acquisition among business education students for empowerment in tertiary institutions, lecturers are to provide students with data and materials necessary to focus their thinking and interactions in class, use learner-centered teaching method in teaching, arouse the interest of the students in the class and enforce that students attend teaching and practical sessions among others. This is in line with the suppositions of Obayi, Anosike and Ezeyi (2019) that for teaching entrepreneurship, teachers should use learner-centred teaching methods that are activity based during Business Education curriculum implementation to promote active participation of all learners so as to enhance acquisition of entrepreneurial skills for job and wealth creation. The findings are also in agreement with the opinions of Owaji Dambo and Owaji (2017) that for the achievement of entrepreneurship education, teacher training and retraining packages should be provided and university authorities should endeavour to organize workshops and in-service training programmes for Business Educators.

The null hypotheses results indicate that there are no significant differences between the mean ratings of Business Educators in universities and those in colleges of education with respect to government and lecturers related strategies for promoting entrepreneurial skills acquisition among female business education students for empowerment in tertiary institutions in South East. This implies that institution status is not a determinant factor for strategies to be used in promoting entrepreneurial skills acquisition in tertiary institutions.

Conclusion

Government and lecturers related strategies can be used to promote entrepreneurial skills acquisition among female business education students for empowerment in tertiary institutions in South East Nigeria. Tertiary institution status is not a determinant factor for the strategies to be applied. Hence when the strategies identified are applied, they will go a long way towards helping the female business education students acquire entrepreneurship skills that will enable them function in the society, be self-employed and employ others. It will help reduce unemployment rate and vices in the society.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are hereby made:

1. Female business education students should develop keen interest in acquiring entrepreneurship skills to enable them function appropriately in the society.
2. Lecturers in tertiary institutions should as a matter-of-fact device way to ensure that students are provided with data and materials necessary for entrepreneurial skills acquisition.
3. Government should liaise with tertiary institutions authorities to provide and maintain entrepreneurship equipment for students use and proper skills acquisition.

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