



BUSINESS EDUCATION STUDENTS' PERCEPTION OF THE INFLUENCE OF TECHNOLOGY ON PRODUCTION EFFICIENCY OF ENTREPRENEURS IN RIVERS STATE

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Abstract

Technology has a significant influence on how 21st century entrepreneurs carry out their quotidian business operations. It has intrinsic and extrinsic; physical and abstract lucrative benefits that have the potency of accentuating the production efficiency of an entrepreneur. The crux of this empirical study was to find out the opinions of business education students on the influence of technology on production efficiency of entrepreneurs in Rivers State. Descriptive research survey design was used for the study. Two research questions were raised to guide the study. The actual population was 956 which encompasses 456 Rivers State University Students and 500 Ignatius Ajuru University of Education students in the Department of Business Education and Faculty of Business Studies respectively who have undertaken Entrepreneurship Education as a course. The entire population was adopted for the study as no sampling was done since the researchers considered the population manageable. A self-made questionnaire instrument entitled: "Business Education Students' Perception of the Influence of Technology on Production Efficiency Entrepreneurs Questionnaire (BESPIPEEQ)" was used to garner data. The instrument was duly content and face-validated by experts. The reliability test gave a coefficient of 0.89; data analysis was done, using mean and standard deviation. The researchers found out that computers, routers, smartphones, digital eye glasses, industrial machines, elevators, robots, solar panels, sensors, transport technologies and internet platforms are among the readily available technologies that are requisite for production efficiency of entrepreneurs. It was concluded that technology in entrepreneurship can systematically produce significant transformation in the areas of chains of distribution, logistics, minimum efficient plant sizes and capital required. Based on the findings made, the researchers recommended that curriculum implementers of Business Education program should lay emphasis on the principles and practices of technology in the teaching of Entrepreneurship Education as a lead to production efficiency of entrepreneurs.

Keywords: Technology, Production Efficiency, Entrepreneurs, Curriculum implementers and Business Education



Introduction

Technology affects every aspect of human and entrepreneurial endeavours. In contemporary times, technology has helped to promote the reconstruction and redefining of how entrepreneurial activities are being carried out. The holistic and effective management of entrepreneurship in Nigeria can experience a better job procedure and work efficiency via use of technologies. At the same time, technology has opened novel ways of exchanging administrative and managerial ideas, implementing program policies and allows for strategic and synergistic collaboration beyond borders.

Etymologically, the use of the term “technology” came into being in the Greek nation over some 200 years ago. As a unique and distinctive locution of the Greek historical lexicology, the vocabulary, technology which has become a household appellation in our contemporary socio-cultural, sociopolitical and socioeconomic precincts was coined from two disparate but interrelated Greek abstractions: “*Techne - Techniques*” and “*Logia Study*”. Sequel to this inkling, technology could then be explicated to mean the garnering, assemblage or cumulating of different modus, capacity, arts, facility, means or approaches in the creation of a product or in the consummation of organizational objectives such as in terms of scientific probing.

Technology is an applied science which in this instance, could be regarded to mean any activity or tool that forms, transforms or results in change of culture of a regimented group. A modern example is the rise of communication technology which has lessened barriers to human interaction and as a result, has helped to spawn novel subcultures; the rise of cyber culture has at its basis the development of the internet and the computer. Be that as it may, it could still be argued that not all technology enhances culture in a creative way; technology can also help facilitate political oppression and war via tools such as guns. As a cultural activity, technology predates both science and engineering, each of which formalizes some aspects of technological endeavour (Ohaka and Akpomi, 2018).

Similarly, it is observed that the term technology rose to prominence in the 20th century in connection with the second industrial revolution. The meaning changed in the early 20th century when American social scientists, beginning with Thorstein Bunde Veblen translated ideas from German concept of the “*Technik*” into technology. In German and other European languages, there is a distinction between “*technik*” and “*technologie*” but they are usually combined to mean “*technology*”. By 1930, “*technology*” referred not only to the study of the *industrial art* but to the



industrial artists themselves. The use of the term “technology” has changed significantly over the last 200 years. Before the 20th century, the term was uncommon in English, and it was used either to refer to the description or study of the useful arts or to allude to technical education, as in the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. In 1937, the American sociologist Read Vain wrote that technology includes all tools, machines, utensils, weapons, instrument, housing, clothing, communicating and transporting devices and the skills by which we produce and use them. Bain's definition remains common amongst scholars today, especially social scientists and engineers who usually prefer to define technology as applied science rather than as the things that people make and use (Meaning of Technology, 2018).

Certainly, technology when judiciously used in the industrial spectrum remains a significant and pivotal tool for production efficiency in contemporary entrepreneurship. Technology application and utilization in entrepreneurship brings about lucrative benefits such as; improved standard of communication between the internal (employees) and external customers (buyers of the product), reduce marketing and logistics costs, enlarge the market scope of the entrepreneur and engender other innovative tendencies. Affeldet and Silver (2013) also noted that the use of technology in entrepreneurship like the Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) enhance production efficiency by allowing entrepreneurs understand their position in relation to their competitors, learn about customers, monitor relationships with suppliers and control strategic objectives.

In the same vein, technology is said to have a significant influence on how the 21st century entrepreneurs carry out their quotidian business operations. It has intrinsic and extrinsic; physical and abstract lucrative benefits that have the potency of accentuating the production efficiency of an entrepreneur (Delaney and D'Agostino, 2015). Following this, it could be contended that the effective and judicious utilization of technology for business operations can culminate in improved productivity in all ramifications of a business. Being a broad and expansive phenomenon, technology could be seen also as a breakthrough in science, which usually tends to bring about improved productivity for the modern day entrepreneurs when adequately utilized. The use of technology by entrepreneurs can also lead to improved productivity by making it easy for information to be shared and stored; and also decreases human error through automation; add up to a reduction in costs and an increase in business revenue (Bryant, 2017).



Thus, technology could be perceived as the application of scientific knowledge to the practical aim of human life or, as it is sometimes phrased, to mean the change and manipulation of the human environment. Also, some related theories of technology have often attempted to predict the future of technology based on the high technology and science of the time. As with all predictions of the future, however, technology is uncertain. It is predicted that in the future, technology will mainly consist of an overlapping revolution of genetics, nanotechnology and robotics with robotics being the most pertinent of the three (Meaning of Technology, 2018). However, technology can be properly defined as the meticulous and systematic application of science towards the realization and fulfillment of a given venture. These ventures are often times set for profit maximization by the entrepreneurs.

An entrepreneur could be said to be efficiently productive after using technology, when the entrepreneur has produced along the possibility frontier of the business. For the entrepreneur, production efficiency is anchored on the ability of the entrepreneur to utilize limited technological resources to attain maximum productivity. Although relatively cumbersome to measure practically, production efficiency has to do with the production of goods and services with the optimal combination of inputs to produce maximum output for the minimal cost. It involves making rational use of resources and exploring all production possibilities to the maximum. It could also involve the augmentation of the subsystems so as to achieve a complete whole (Pettinger, 2019; www.arburg.org, 2019). Fernando (2018) in his opinion also maintained that an entrepreneur can only be said to be efficiently productive if such an entrepreneur does not find another way of producing more with the same number or quantity of productive factor.

A plethora of entrepreneurs today, desire to use technology in their corporate organizations for different reasons but most especially for the purpose of economic growth and maximum productivity. It was noted in Digital Dialect Consultancy (DDC, 2014; Ojeifo, 2012), that the use of technology for production efficiency by entrepreneurs can broadly be seen and categorized into disparate levels; the high level-elite users, the medium level-middle class users and the low level users. These levels of use which could also be regarded as a defining characteristic of an entrepreneur who opts for technology utilization does not encompass expertise, knowledge, passion, exploration and lifestyle. Sequel to this, DDC (2014)



highlighted six essential defining elements of entrepreneurs that use technology as follows; (1) the participating technology user content creator, (2) the personable networker the humanist hyper sharer, (3) the experienced experimenter -the tinkerer, (4) productive learner self improver, (5) the satisfied, yet frustrated Maker-Doer and (6) Notched the spectator.

The goal of production efficiency is centered on accelerating cost-effectiveness internally and externally. However, to actually meet the demand of efficiency in production, the entire value chain and all variables should be included starting from the process of designing the product to the planning stage. This is consequent upon the fact that each individual area offers the potential to reduce unit costs on a sustainable basis by minimizing energy requirements, material input, personnel, processing time, production steps, among others. The drive for production efficiency within every organization requires interdisciplinary expertise and proficiency which should range from machine, robotic, control and process technology through to IT-networked production planning with data exchanged across all levels (www.arburg.org, 2019).

Whenever the phenomenon of production is broached, two elements come into the mind: judicious use of scarce resources and maximum productivity. This was the core essence why Standish (2010) observed that production efficiency is the activity that encompasses the objective use of resources and exploiting of the full available potential. Supporting this, Samuelson and Nordhaus (2005) asserted that production efficiency is actually the use of economic resources to produce the minimum level of satisfaction possible with given input and technology. This implies that, the determination of efficient production begins with the product design. However, the approaches concerning production efficiency should be handled wholly and entirely to enable one integrate the important function into a part thereby, ameliorating various production steps. Achieving perfect quality and output which are integral elements of production can be made realistic by adopting a precise approach when carrying out a business or entrepreneurial activity.

The word entrepreneur originated from a Latin word called: *entrepredere*, during the era of the French military in the seventh century. It is associated with the following phrases; between-taker, go-between, organiser, independent business activity,



innovative individual, among others. An entrepreneur is a person who unravels a business opportunity and takes positive advantage of the scarce resources to meet with unlimited opportunities profitably. The entrepreneur ventures into the business of organising, controlling, coordinating and directing human and material resources to achieve economic, social and financial goals of the business enterprise (Ohaka, Nnokam and Akpomi, 2018; Amesi, 2015; Amaewhule, 2014; Gangaiah and Viswanath, 2014; Ohaka, 2018; Ahmad and Seymour, 2006; AkanwaandAgu, 2005; Akpomiand Amadi, 2010).

The success and progressive development of every contemporary entrepreneur essentially relies on some factors among which are choosing the right technology. Entrepreneurs, who invest in technology and choose the path of innovation, tend to increase their market share, financial figures and overall competitiveness. Technology provides the entrepreneur with the opportunity to analyze specific data and plan the direction and destination of their business accordingly. It also provides the entrepreneur with plethora of tools which can be used to solve complex problems and plan the scalability (future growth) of the business. In this contemporary milieu, it is proven that the use of technology for digital marketing is a great tool which enables the entrepreneurs promote their products or services to the global market from the comfort of their offices or homes (Butt, 2017).

However, the objectives of using technology as an entrepreneur may encompass the following; ability to procure products with high quality at an affordable price, creation of lucrative and productive job opportunities for young school leavers and other job seekers in the labour market, safeguarding of necessary interests of the internal customers of the organization, maximization of profit to the utmost satisfaction of the producer or business owner, creation of a reliable avenue via which a country like Nigeria could contain its multifaceted socioeconomic, sociopolitical and socio-cultural challenges and finally, the provision of constitutive or essential products to satisfy the needs and wants of the target customers.

It has become obvious that technological environment actually influences entrepreneurship in disparate dimensions ranging from the way products are being marketed to the way entrepreneurs relates with the external customers. An entrepreneur with a sophisticated technological innovation can favourably compete with competitors. Technology remains a key deterministic factor of the growth and development of entrepreneurs. Technology is one of the entrepreneurs' strategically



relevant and fundamental instruments. Technology, to a reasonable degree, can ultimately influence the rational decisions of entrepreneurs concerning the direction, objectives, strategy and model of their businesses. Through technology, business ideas are sold to the public within a specified and expected period of time, usually without much difficulty. Amidst the environment of every business endeavour, technology is ranked among those uncontrollable forces that determine either the failure or success of any business. The knowledge, skills and attitude doing business are effectively handled in the Business Education programme.

Attempting to consciously explicate the meaning of Business Education, Ohaka and Bupo(2019) opined that Business Education is a program of study geared towards the acquisition of knowledge and skills needed in the world of work and in the educational spectrum. In a related development Ohaka and Onuoha (2017) added that being a core aspect of general education, Business Education is that type of education that is predicated on equipping its target audience with distinctive skills, knowledge, aptitude and attitudes requisite for occupational competence in the areas of education and business. However, Akpomi(2008) and Ohaka(2018) after a meticulous consideration of the concept of Business Education agrees that in Business Education, knowledge gaining and skill acquisition for the business and educational world constitutes an integral element.

Amidst the foregoing, it is observed that modern day entrepreneurs are still being greeted with disparate levels and dimensions of technological encumbrances. As experience may reveal, this observed trend could be sequel to the integration of technology into entrepreneurship. For instance, Conley (2010) established that the use of technology for the production efficiency of entrepreneurs is sometimes hampered by; lack of knowledge of specific technology, paucity of finance, inadequate professional training, low level of government intervention and constraints associated with technology accessibility. In the same vein, despite the fact that technology has become a common veritable tool for production efficiency in the global market by easing business operations, it still appears that some of the contemporary entrepreneurs in Rivers State are yet to be aware of these new technologies and their influence on production efficiency. However, the few who may be aware still face some challenges arising from functionality and applicability. Thus, concerned about this development, the researchers embarked on the research. Therefore, it was against this background that the following research questions were posed to guide the study;



Research Questions

The following research questions are raised to guide the study;

1. What are the opinions of Business Education students on available technologies for the production efficiency of entrepreneurs in Rivers State?
2. What are the opinions of Business Education students on the challenges of the use of technology for production efficiency of entrepreneurs in Rivers State?

Methods

The descriptive research survey design method was used for the study. The rationale for the use of research design was sequel to the fact that it actually promotes the use of questionnaire instrument for the gardening of data from a representative sample. The actual population was 956 which encompass 456 Rivers State University Students and 500 Ignatius Ajuru University of Education students in the Department of Business Education and Faculty of Business Studies respectively who have undertaken Entrepreneurship Education as a course. The population distribution is thus presented as follows:

Table 1: Population Distribution of Respondents

S/NO	Institutions	No. of Respondents
1.	Rivers State University, Port Harcourt	456
2.	Ignatius Ajuru University of Education	500
	Sum Total	956

Source: Examinations and Records Offices of both institutions (2018).

The entire population was adopted for the study as no sampling was done since the researchers considered the population manageable. A self-made questionnaire instrument entitled: Business Education Students' Perception of the Influence of Technology on Production Efficiency Entrepreneurs (BESPIPEE) was used to garner data. The instrument which contained a total of 35 items was duly content and face-validated by experts in the fields of Business Education and Measurement and Evaluation. The test-re-test method was used to establish a reliability which gave a coefficient of 0.89; data analysis was done using mean and standard deviation.

Results

Research Question 1

What are the opinions of Business Education students on available technologies for the production efficiency of entrepreneurs in Rivers State?

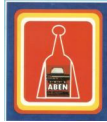


Table 2: Mean responses of the opinions Business Education students on the technologies available for the production efficiency of entrepreneurs in Rivers State

S/N.	Questionnaire Items	N	Mean	S.D	Remarks
1.	Router	956	3.31	0.84	Strongly Agreed
2.	Network switch	956	3.22	0.7	Strongly Agrees
3.	Voice over Internet Protocol	956	3.21	0.69	Strongly Agreed
4.	Desktop	956	3.47	0.73	Strongly Agreed
5.	Notebook Computers	956	2.13	1.06	Agreed
6.	Multifunction printers	956	3.39	0.74	Strongly Agrees
7.	Projector	956	3.50	0.58	Strongly Agreed
8.	Headsets	956	3.59	0.56	Strongly Agreed
9.	Internet modem	956	3.61	0.53	Strongly Agrees
10.	Smartphones	956	3.82	0.40	Strongly Agrees
11.	Tablets	956	3.25	0.80	Strongly Agreed
12.	Digital TVs	956	3.02	0.89	Strongly Agreed
13.	Robots	956	1.37	0.66	Strongly Disagreed
14.	Cell phones	956	3.74	0.46	Strongly Agree
15.	Digital eye glasses	956	2.36	1.05	Agreed
16.	Solar panels	956	2.07	0.91	Agreed
17.	E-mail	956	3.69	0.56	Strongly Agreed
18.	Elevators	956	1.51	0.66	Strongly Disagreed
19.	Particle collider spacecraft	956	1.44	0.63	Strongly Disagreed
20.	Wind turbines and grids	956	1.43	0.59	Strongly Disagreed
21.	Artificial intelligence technology	956	2.41	0.59	Disagreed
22.	Industrial machines	956	2.74	0.81	Agreed
23.	Communication satellites	956	3.50	0.73	Strongly Agreed
24.	Multimedia	956	3.54	0.66	Strongly Agreed
25.	Medical technology	956	2.13	0.72	Disagreed
26.	Transport technology	956	2.41	0.81	Disagreed
27.	Laptops	956	3.67	0.55	Strongly Agreed
Total Mean/SD			76.53	23.91	Strongly Agreed
Grand Mean/SD			72.99	23.38	Strongly Agreed

Source: Field Survey, 2019

Table 2 above shows the perception of Business Education students regarding the technologies that are available for the production efficiency of entrepreneurs in Rivers State. From the table as shown above, the respondents all agreed to the availability of the technologies except items; 5,13,18,19 and 20. This implies that the available technologies for production efficiency of entrepreneurs in Rivers State are; routers, networks, e-mail, laptops, transport technology, medical technology,



multimedia, communication satellites, industrial machines, artificial intelligence technology, wind turbines and grids, elevators, solar panels, digital eye glasses, cell phones, robots, digital TVs, smartphones, internet modern, tablets, headsets, projector, multi-function printers, notebook computers, desktop and network switch.

Research Question 2

What are the opinions of Business Education students on the challenges of the use of technology for production efficiency of entrepreneurs in Rivers State?

Table 3: Mean responses on the opinions of Business Education students regarding the challenges of the use of technology for production efficiency of entrepreneurs in Rivers State.

S/N	Questionnaire Items	N	Mean	S.D	Remarks
1.	Accessibility constraints	956	3.63	0.62	Strongly Agreed
2.	Inadequate professional training	956	3.51	0.64	Strongly Agreed
3.	Paucity of finance	956	3.70	0.47	Strongly Agreed
4.	Dearth of manpower with sufficient technological knowhow	956	3.54	0.62	Strongly Agreed
5.	Low level of government intervention	956	3.61	0.54	Strongly Agreed
6.	Non-availability of technical knowhow	956	3.53	0.61	Strongly Agreed
7.	Inadequate supervision of the use of technologies	956	3.05	0.77	Strongly Agreed
Total Mean/SD			24.57	3.50	Strongly Agreed
Grand Mean/SD			21.96	2.98	Strongly Agreed

Source: Field Survey, 2019

The results in table 3 above shows the views of Business Education students regarding the challenges of the use of technology for the production efficiency of entrepreneurs in Rivers State. The table shows a unanimous response of strongly agreed by greater number of the respondents to the questionnaire items. This means that, accessibility constraints, inadequate professional training, paucity of finance, dearth of manpower with sufficient technological knowhow, low level of government intervention, non-availability of technical know-how and inadequate supervision of the use of technologies are the perception of the Business Education students on the challenges of the use of technology for the production efficiency of entrepreneurs. This is illustrated in Figure 2 below:

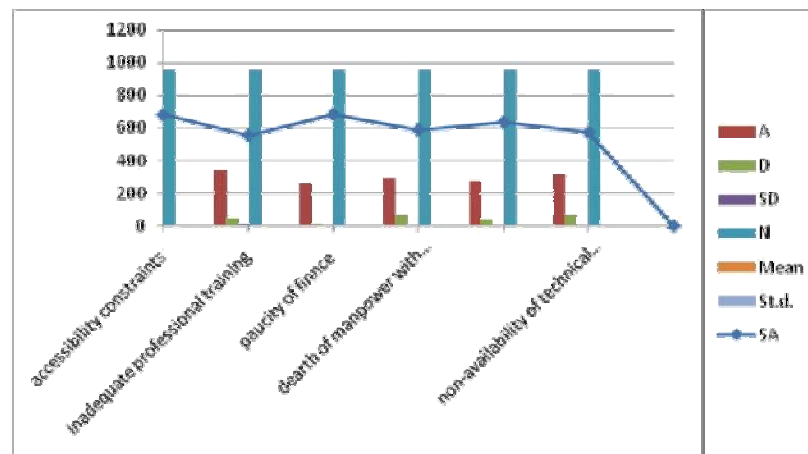


Figure 2: Chart showing the challenges faced by entrepreneurs on the use of technologies for production efficiency in Rivers State

Figure 2 above shows the chronological ranking of the challenges facing entrepreneurs in the use of technologies for production efficiency as perceived by Business Education students in Rivers State universities. From the chart, it is evident that Business Education students in Rivers State universities believe that paucity of finance is the most significant challenge faced by entrepreneurs in the use of technologies for production efficiency in Rivers State. While inadequate supervision of the use of technologies ranked the lowest. This implies that amongst other challenges, paucity of funds is a major challenge faced by entrepreneurs in the use of technologies for production efficiency in Rivers State.

Discussion of Findings

The result in table 2 shows the technologies that are available for the production efficiency of entrepreneurs in Rivers State. From the table as shown above, the respondents all agreed to the availability of the technologies except items; 5,13,18,19 and 20. This implies that the available technologies for production efficiency of entrepreneurs in Rivers State are; routers, networks, e-mail, laptops, transport technology, medical technology, multimedia, communication satellites, industrial machines, artificial intelligence technology, wind turbines and grids, elevators, solar panels, digital eye glasses, cell phones, robots, digital TVs, smartphones, internet modern, tablets, headsets, projector, multi-function printers, notebook computers, desktop and network switch. These discoveries align with that of Conley (2010), Staff Writer (2017) and Quizlet Incorporated (2019). They, amongst other things, found out that internet modern, router, network switch,



multifunction printers, robots, information technology, elevators, email, multimedia, telephone, medical technology are available technologies in today's modern world.

The results in table 3 above shows the views of Business Education students on the challenges of the use of technology for the production efficiency of entrepreneurs in Rivers State. The table shows a unanimous response of strongly agreed by greater number of the respondents to the questionnaire items. This means that, accessibility constraints, inadequate professional training, paucity of finance, dearth of manpower with sufficient technological knowhow, low level of government intervention, non-availability of technical know-how and inadequate supervision of the use of technologies are the perception of the Business Education students on the challenges of the use of technology for the production efficiency of entrepreneurs. This result is in consonance with that of Conley (2010) who identified access constraints, inadequate professional training, low level of government intervention, paucity of finance, entrepreneur disposition to the use of technology, among others as possible challenges of technology use.

Conclusions

From the foregoing, suffice it to state that it is incredibly unrealistic to expect modern day entrepreneurs to actually attain production efficiency without leveraging on the lucrative benefits of technology utilization in this digital age. This is despite the reasonable cost the entrepreneur may have to bear to realize this unprecedented feat. Furthermore, as one of the pivotal elements of in the external environment of the entrepreneur's business, technology has the capacity to dramatically alter or modify the business landscape making it realistic for the entrepreneur to produce new and improved products at affordable cost and at the same time open up novel business frontiers. In all, it is maintained that technology in entrepreneurship can systematically produce significant transformations in the areas of chains of distribution, logistics, minimum efficient plant sizes and capital required.

Recommendations

The researchers advance the following recommendations based on the findings and results of the study:

1. Government should provide professional and technical training programmes where entrepreneurs trained on the use of technology for maximum organizational productivity. This will help to enhance the confidence of entrepreneurs on the significance of technology to production efficiency.



2. There should be a critical and objective review of the current course content of entrepreneurship education as is being taught in Nigerian universities today by the National Universities commission to include the concept of technology, its usage and strategic influence on entrepreneurs' production efficiency.
3. Curriculum implementers of Business Education program should lay emphasis on the principles and practices of technology in the teaching of Entrepreneurship Education as a lead to production efficiency of entrepreneurs.
4. Contemporary entrepreneurs must see that they make the use of technology an integral part of their business culture as it will help to improve their competitive advantage and enlarge their customer base.
5. Government should provide grants and subsidies for registered entrepreneurs to enable them to boost their product delivery through technological involvement.

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