



ENTREPRENEURIAL CREATIVE THINKING SKILLS REQUIRED OF BUSINESS EDUCATION GRADUATES FOR SELF-RELIANCE IN BAYELSA STATE

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Abstract

The study examined entrepreneurial creative thinking skills required of business education graduates for self-reliance in Bayelsa state. The study adopted the survey research design and was guided by one research question and one null hypothesis. The population comprised 162 registered entrepreneurs in Bayelsa State. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire of a four-point response scale of highly required (HR), required (R), Lowly required (LR), and Not required (NR). Mean and standard deviation were used to analyze data related to the research question while t-test statistic was used to test the hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance. The results showed that entrepreneurial creative thinking skills ability to recognize business opportunities, ability to create new idea in business, ability to apply new ideas in different situations, ability to change things around in business, innovative ability, ability to discover new ways of solving business problems, ability to do things by applying new methods, ability to find various ways to business success, ability to analyze critically any business plan, ability to put the right personnel to accomplish a business task are required of business education graduates for self-reliance in Bayelsa State. Consequently, the study recommended that business educators should properly integrate the identified entrepreneurial creative thinking skills into specific objectives for training undergraduates for entrepreneurship development in Nigeria. Through the development of entrepreneurship education, awareness will be created among the students so that they will be willing to cultivate keen interest in the skills inherent in business education programme.

Keywords: *Entrepreneurial skills, Business Education, Self-Reliance*

Introduction:

The issue of profitable engagement of graduates through entrepreneurship education has taken the Centre stage of every development discourse especially in the present face of economic crisis and increase in the level of graduates unemployment and poverty. Nigeria in the 60s, securing jobs after graduation was not a difficult task. It was observed that graduates secured jobs in their final year in school (Onyesom&Uwaifo, 2013). Onyesom and Uwaifo further maintained that appointment letters were issued to young graduates at the orientation camps during the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC). But today, the situation is apparently different. The soaring rate of graduate



unemployment has become a source of worry to the graduates, their parents, relatives and of course, governments at all levels. Indeed, it has become social economic and political problem in Nigeria.

The quest to reduce unemployment, poverty and improve the living standard of Nigerians has made both past and present administrations to establish various poverty alleviation programmes since independence. These include; the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP), National Directorate of Employment (NDE), National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS), and most recently, N-POWER among others. Meanwhile, the Federal Government believed that one sure route for the achievement of most of these programme objectives is through education, most especially entrepreneurship education. Entrepreneurship education is the process of providing individuals with the concepts and skills to recognize business opportunities and to have insight, self-esteem and knowledge to act where others have hesitated. The essence of entrepreneurship education is to help students acquire increased understanding of entrepreneurship and equip them with necessary entrepreneurial approaches to the world of work as well as prepare them to act as entrepreneurs and managers of new businesses (Buba, Rimamnde, Umman, & Mallo, 2015).

Entrepreneurship is an essential engine of growth to any economy. It is key factor in local economic development (Deli, 2015). Longman (2012), defined entrepreneurship as the ability to innovate and generate business ideas or identify business opportunities and put in place a business venture to take advantage of the probability of success or failure. Entrepreneurship can be described as the art of being an entrepreneur. Entrepreneurship is a dynamic process of creating incremental wealth (Oduma, 2012). This according to Oduma is created by individuals who assume the major risk in terms of time and/or career commitment or provide value of some products or service which may be new or unique but the entrepreneur must add value by receiving and locating necessary skills and resources.

Entrepreneurship skills are skills related to creativity, innovation, personal characteristics, invention, practical skills and marketing (Inyannah, 2016). These Skills enable graduates to become self-employed entrepreneurs. The entrepreneurial personal characteristics skills are the personal traits, values, beliefs, attributes, the acquisition of individual training knowledge that can be employed in business for effective performance leading to success. These skills influence an entrepreneur to be optimistic, visionary, initiative, self-controlled and motivated and effective in decision making. Sarwoko (2013) stated that personal characteristic skills and competencies are major determinants of business performance in small and medium enterprises.

Entrepreneurial creative thinking skills are the skills that enable an individual entrepreneur to see situations from a variety of perspectives and come up with original ideas. Creative thinking simply means looking at something in a new way. It is the very definition of thinking outside the box. These entrepreneurial creative thinking skills enable the entrepreneur to be an innovator who applies new ideas to different situations in different ways. Such an entrepreneur is able to turn the business around to fit into a societal new platform in terms of goods and services. According to Zimmerer and Scarborough (2011), Creativity is the tendency to generate or recognize ideas, alternatives or possibilities that may be useful in solving problems. Creative entrepreneurs have the ability to devise new ways to carry out business tasks, solve problems, and meet up challenges. They always bring fresh perspectives to their works. This way of thinking can help organizations move in more productive directions.

Creativity is the foundation of innovation and successful entrepreneurship. Creativity is thinking new things and innovation is doing new things or old things in new ways. Kacker (2015) argued that today's organizations are knowledge based and their success depends on creativity, innovation, discovery and inventiveness. Successful entrepreneurship is the result of a disciplined systematic process of applying creativity and innovation to needs and opportunities in the market place. Entrepreneurs are those couple their creative ideas with purposeful actions and structure of a



business. Thus, successful entrepreneurship is a constant process that relies on the skills of creativity and innovation in the business and its environs.

Business education programme has been carefully designed to help individuals to be self-reliance. Business education is a viable sub-sector of Vocational and Technical Education (VTE) which equips its recipients with entrepreneurship skills for business (Iyekekpolo, 2014). It is a programme that is carefully designed to meet the basic skills, knowledge and capabilities needed to function as a business executive (as entrepreneur). Business education is that aspect of educational training which an individual receives with the primary motive of enabling the individual acquire adequate attitude, concepts, knowledge, understanding and skills in business activities for vocational use (Onyesom&Umoeshiet, 2013). It is a programme that equips the individuals with necessary skills and theoretical knowledge needed to perform in the business world as producers and consumers of goods and services. In the business education programme, emphasis is usually placed on entrepreneurial skills that will enable the recipients to be gainfully employed in one organization or the other hence, its graduates should not experience acute unemployment. The possession of entrepreneurial skills by business education graduates will not only help them to gain employment but also help them to progress within an enterprise so as to achieve one's potential and contribute successfully to enterprise strategic directions.

Gender difference have been reported in the operation of entrepreneurship in Nigeria. According to Etukudo (2017), self-employment is on the rise with women launching a large share of new enterprises in Africa, in spite of discrimination in Education and particularly in entrepreneurship education with accompanying skill training. The rationale for this study was strictly geared towards providing an empirical basis for examining the entrepreneurial creative thinking skills required of business education graduates for self-reliance in Bayelsa State.

Statement of the Problem

The issue of unemployment, poverty and hunger in Nigeria remain a great challenge confronting the government and the people today. The quest to reduce unemployment and improve the living standard of Nigerians has made both past and present administrations to establish various poverty alleviation programmes since independences but to no avail. There is a challenge of mismatch between the training given to students in school and the skills expected of them to be self-reliant in the world of work. Many new ventures creations collapse as a result of lack of appropriate skills such as creative thinking skills in business operations. To this end, GreatBatch and Lewis (2007) keenly observed that employers seek to recruit and retain employees with necessary creative thinking skills. The Association of Graduates Recruiters (2009) in the Uk identified that there was a skill gap in the graduates leaving universities. However, there seems to be no clear evidence of creative thinking skills requires of business education graduates to be self-reliant. This study was therefore designed to empirically ascertain the entrepreneurial creative thinking skills required of business education graduates for self-reliance in the operation of small and medium scale businesses in Bayelsa State.

Purpose of the Study

The Main purpose of this study was to determine the entrepreneurial creative thinking skills required of business education graduates for self-reliance in Bayelsa State. Specifically, the study determines SMEs operators' perception on:

Research Question.

The following research question guided the study.

1. What creative thinking skills are required of business education graduates for self-reliance in Bayelsa State.



Hypothesis

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

There is no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female SMEs operators regarding entrepreneurial creative thinking skills required of business education for self-reliance in Bayelsa State.

Method

A Survey research design was adopted for the study, as the study sought the opinions of respondents on the entrepreneurial creative thinking skills required of business education graduates for self-reliance, using questionnaire instrument.

The study was carried out in Bayelsa State. The Population Comprised 162 registered Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) operators. The entire population was studied due to its manageable size. Thus, there was no sampling. The instrument for data collection was a validated structured questionnaire on a four-point rating scale of Highly required (HR), Required (R), Lowly required (LR) and not required (NR). The reliability of the instrument was ensured using Cronbach Alpha techniques and the internal consistency of 0.69 for the instrument was gotten. Out of the 162 copies of the questionnaire administered to the respondents, by the researcher and two researcher assistants, a total 155 copies (representing 95.7%) were correctly filled and used for data analyzing. The data obtained were analyzed using mean scores and standard deviation to answer the research question while t-test statistic was used to test the hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance. The item by item analysis relative to the questionnaire items was based on real limit numbers. Any item with mean of 2.50 and above was accepted as required skill while any item with mean less than 2.50 was not required skill. The null hypothesis was accepted when the t-calculated value was less than t-critical value and was rejected when the t-calculated value was equal or greater than the t-critical value.

Research Question 1: What creative thinking skills are required of business education graduates for self-reliance in Bayelsa State.

Table 1: Mean Ratings of the Responses of Respondents on Entrepreneurial creative thinking skills required of Business Education Graduates for Self-Reliance in Bayelsa State. (n=155)

| S/N | Items on Creative thinking skills | X | SD | Remarks |
|-------------------|---|-------------|-------------|-----------------|
| 1. | Ability to recognize business opportunities | 3.53 | 0.56 | Required |
| 2. | Ability to create new ideas in business | 3.47 | 0.68 | Required |
| 3. | Ability to apply new ideas in different situation | 3.50 | 0.50 | Required |
| 4. | Ability to change things around in business | 3.56 | 0.49 | Required |
| 5. | Innovative ability | 3.83 | 0.46 | Required |
| 6. | Ability to discover new ways of solving business problem | 3.46 | 0.72 | Required |
| 7. | Ability to do things applying new method | 3.71 | 0.48 | Required |
| 8. | Ability to find various ways to business success | 3.36 | 0.52 | Required |
| 9. | Ability to analyze critically any business plan | 3.54 | 0.63 | Required |
| 10. | Ability to put the right people to accomplish a business task | 3.77 | 0.50 | Required |
| GRAND MEAN | | 3.57 | 0.55 | Required |

The results in Table 1 shows that all the ten items achieved the real limit number of 2.50 and above. This indicates that the respondents agreed that all the ten identifies entrepreneurial creative thinking skills are required for business education graduates for self-reliance in Bayelsa State as perceived by the small and medium scale Enterprises (SMEs) operators. The standard deviation of the



ten items ranges between 0.46 to 0.72. This indicates that the responses of the respondents are close to each other.

Hypothesis Testing

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

H_{01} There is no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female SMEs operators regarding entrepreneurial creative thinking skills required of business education graduates for self-reliance in Bayelsa State.

Table 2: T-test summary on the mean ratings of male and female SMEs operators regarding entrepreneurial creative thinking skills required of business education graduates for self-reliance in Bayelsa State.

| S/N | | NO | X | SD | t-cal | t-crit | Level of Sign. | Remarks |
|-----|--------|----|------|------|-------|--------|----------------|--------------|
| 1. | Male | 87 | 3.58 | 0.50 | | | | |
| 2. | Female | 68 | 3.56 | 0.54 | 0.62 | 1.96 | 0.05 | Not rejected |

Data in Table 2 revealed that at 0.05 level of significance, the t-calculated of 0.62 is less than t-critical value of 1.96. The hypothesis therefore, is accepted. This implies that there is no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female SMEs operators regarding entrepreneurial creative thinking skills required of nosiness education graduates for self-reliance in Bayelsa State.

Discussion of Findings:

The findings of the study revealed that all the ten entrepreneurial creative thinking skills were required of business education graduates for self-reliance in Bayelsa State. They include ability to recognize business opportunities, ability to create new ideas in business, ability to apply new ideas in different situations, ability to change things around in business, innovative ability, ability to discover new ways of solving business problem, ability to do things by applying new methods, ability to find various ways to business success, ability to analyze critically any business plan, ability to put the right people to accomplish a business task. The findings of this study agreed with that of Sudath (2012) who found that high creativity in SMEs operators influenced innovation which leads to successful entrepreneurship. In addition, Orhena, Egbule and Utebor (2017) in their study found that creativity and marketing skills were required of business education students of Universities and colleges of education.

The findings on the hypothesis tested should that there is no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female SMEs operators regarding entrepreneurial creative thinking skills required of business education graduates for self-reliance in Bayelsa State. This finding confirmed with that of Obasi (2017) who investigated small and medium scale enterprise skills required by youths and found that there is no significant difference in the mean responses of respondents based on gender.

Conclusion:

Unemployment, poverty and hunger among young people are becoming increasingly pressing both in developing economics and developed countries. There is an observed challenge of mismatch between the skills training given to students in school and skills expected of them to be self-reliant in the world of work. Many new ventures creating collapse as a result of lack of appropriate creative thinking skills in business operations. Business education programme is designed to equipping its recipients with firm-specific, industry-specific and general skills and competencies. This paper therefore concludes by making a passionate appeal to all business education students to make sure



they acquire maximum and sufficient skills and competencies that will help them to live and contribute to sustainable development of entrepreneurial business ventures in Nigeria.

Recommendations:

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made. Business educators should properly integrate the identified entrepreneurial creative thinking skills into specific objectives for training undergraduates for entrepreneurship development in Nigeria. Through the development of entrepreneurship education, awareness will be created among the students so that they will be willing to cultivate keen interest in the skills inherent in business education programme.

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