



EFFECT OF MENTORING APPROACH ON SKILL ACQUISITION AMONG BUSINESS EDUCATION STUDENTS IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN CROSS RIVER STATE

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Abstract

The study investigated the effect of mentoring approach on skills acquisition among business education students in tertiary institutions in Cross River State. Quasi-experimental research design was used in the study. The population of the study consisted of 534 third year Business Education students drawn from two colleges of education and two universities in Cross River State. The sample size of the study comprised 200 students in two colleges of education and two universities offering business education programme. The respondents were assigned into two groups made up of a college of education and a university in each. One of the groups was assigned treatment group and it comprised 100 male and female students. The order group (control group) also comprised 100 male and female students. The Ability Test in business education was used as the instrument for data collection. The instrument was tested for reliability using Cronbach Alpha and it produced an alpha of 0.79. The experiment followed a pre-test and post-test procedures. At the beginning, a pre-test was administered to all the respondents in both groups. After four weeks of mentoring of the experimental group and conventional teaching of the control group on the same topics in business education, a post-test was later administered. The scores obtained from the two administrations were used for data analysis. The research questions were answered using mean and standard deviation while, ANCOVO was used to test the hypotheses. The results suggested that mentoring is a more effective approach to skill acquisition in business education than the conventional teaching approach, and there is no significant difference in the mean skills acquisition score of male and female Business Education students in tertiary institutions in Cross River State. It was recommended that mentoring should be fully embrace in business education as an approach of teaching and learning.

Introduction

Business Education is an academic programme which enables individuals, organisations as well as the society to gain knowledge, experiences, skills and attitude in business in order to take advantage of economic conditions, become rational entity in market environment or become educators in the field of business. In the opinion of Rotua (2017) Business Education is the foundation upon which students build an awareness of business and an understanding of business concept. Business Education creates this awareness in two interrelated areas: firstly by providing education for business and secondly education about business. In the assertion of Okoye in Rotua (2017), education for business provides professional training in method of business making; techniques in business making; tactics to attract clients and make profit; scheming ideas for profitable venture; and to develop appropriate attitude and behaviour of a good businessman. On the other hand, Okoye in Rotua (2017) stated that education about business prepares individuals to know: how and when to buy goods for profitable outcome (in-season and out- season); where to obtain goods for better sales; where to situate business for continued existence; where to make best sales for (increased turnover rate); where to make sales for increase profit; tricks in season forecast for good business making and self-conviction indicator about risk making.

More so, Njoku in Ajisafe, Bolarinwa and Edeh (2015) viewed Business Education as that facet of educational training that helps the individual to acquire relevant skills needed for living. This



view of Business Education is important as it focuses on skills. Aliyu in Ezeani (2012) went this direction to posit that Business Education is an educational programme which involves acquisition of skills, knowledge and competences which makes the recipient or beneficiary proficient. Additionally, Ezeani (2012) opined that Business Education as a discipline is expected to expose its recipients to diversity curricula, hence, it is that type of education that inculcate in its recipients attitudes, knowledge, skills, values required in the business world.

Business education as a field of study is designed to provide knowledge, experiences and skills at different levels: from the secondary school, college of education to the university (at graduate and postgraduate degree levels). However the focus of this study is the tertiary institutions, basically colleges of education and the universities where skills in Business Education are inculcated.

Skill in this study is seen as ability to do something optimally, and it is usually gained through training or experience. In the view of Speelman in Ekong and Ekong (2016), skills are often acquired after a training session or after a practical. Skills, especially in Business Education are inculcated by seeing and doing until mastery of the skills is attained. Skills exist along a continuum of complexity from reproductive to productive. Reproductive skills are those which are focused on applying standard procedures, or automated processes, such as multiplying numbers or typing; productive skills on the other hand involve the application of principles and strategies, such as creative writing or bringing out new ideas.

Skills acquisition on the other hand is the ability to learn or acquire skills. According to Bush (2020), skill acquisition is the ability to be trained on a particular function or task till you become an expert in the skill. In addition, learning a wide range of skills shows a remarkable similarity in development from initial representation of knowledge through initial changes in behaviour to eventual fluent, spontaneous, largely effortless, and highly skilled behaviour and this set of phenomena can be accounted for by a set of basic principles common to acquisition of skills (Dekeyser in Taie, 2014). That is to say, in skill acquisition, people progress in learning variety of skills from initial learning to advanced proficiency.

Skill is like a key used in opening door of opportunity and the inculcating of the right skills is very essential for the success of business education students. This is because skills acquired enhance self-employment, diverse job opportunities, employment generation, effective function of the labour force, and when people practice their skills in a productive way, they earn a living and there will be crime reduction in the society.

Skills in Business Education include accounting, marketing, computation, creativity, innovation, problem-solving, communication, information gathering, maintaining good customers' relations etc. In the assertion of Monllau-Jaques, Rodríguez-Ávila and Miralles de Imperial (2014) the most valued skills are the learning ability, the ability to manage work, sense of responsibility, motivation to work, be on time, the relationship with the working environment and the ability to team work. These skills could be acquired through vocational and white-collar job training. While vocational skill is the ability to be trained on a particular function or task till you become an expert on the skill, white-collar skill is a type of skill acquisition and empowerment program that allows educated people get the skills that would help them become experts in certain fields (bush, 2020). Equally, the OECD in European commission (2015:1) identified three main groups of skills to include:

1. **Technical** – communication, environment monitoring, problem solving, technology implementation and use, interpersonal, organizational skills.
2. **Business management** – planning and goal setting, decision making, human resources management, marketing, finance, accounting, customer relations, quality control, negotiation, business launch, growth management, compliance with regulations skills.
3. **Personal entrepreneurial** – self-control and discipline, risk management, innovation, persistence, leadership, change management, network building, and strategic thinking.

Skills can be improved using various approaches among which is mentoring. As Ayodeji (2015) noted, mentoring is rapidly becoming worldwide as a highly effective human resource development process. Murray and Owen in Chan (n.d) considered mentoring as a deliberate pairing of a more skilled or experienced person with a lesser skilled or experienced one, with the agreed-



upon goal of having the less experienced person grow and develop specific competencies. Mentoring could also be seen as the help and support an inexperienced person received from a more experienced person to succeed in given field. Although the definition of mentoring has been refined over the years, a core feature that defines mentoring relationships and distinguishes it from other types of personal relationships is that mentoring is a developmental relationship that is embedded within the career context (Ragins and Kram, 2007). More so, a mentor basically has two primary functions for the mentee: the career related function which establishes the mentor as a coach who provides advice to enhance the mentee's professional performance and development, and the psychosocial function that establishes the mentor as a role model and support system for the mentee (The American Psychological Association, 2006).

Learning from a mentor could be a brilliant strategy for improving skills of students especially in Business Education. This is because mentor takes the responsibility to train and support young people to become skilful just like the mentor himself. The mentor goes extra length to help the students avoid initial mistakes that has been made and corrected by the mentor. Mentors as described by Cranwell-Ward, Bossons, and Gover in Leea, et al (2016) employ various approaches and techniques to enable learning to take place: among them are coaching, guiding, counseling, supporting and the use of reflective dialogue on experiences (Zachary, in Leea, et al (2016). In an era where skill is emphasized, Adie (2019) stressed that students need to be emotionally and socially supported and guided by a more experienced person who may not necessarily be a family member but one with an outstanding quality and strong passion to develop others; this person is best described as a mentor.

Mentoring therefore, provides the platform for students to be guided and supported through the processes of skills acquisition, development and utilization. The benefits of mentoring according to St-Jean and Audet (2009) include an increase in management knowledge and skills, improved vision for their business venture and identifying new opportunities. Also, Ayodeji (2015) posited that mentorship and business development offers a wide range of benefits such as welfare, satisfaction, development, progress, feeling rejuvenated in career development, learning how to use new technologies, becoming aware of business issues, methods, strategies or perspectives that are vital to business.

Furthermore, study have shown that people who have been mentored often do better in their endeavour. For instance, Karcheret al; and Rhodes et al in Chan, Rhodes, Howard, Lowe, Schwarz and Herrera (2013) declared that relational improvements that stem from involvement in mentoring programmes in turn have been linked to improvement in self-worth, perceived scholastic competence, and academic achievement. Similarly, the study of Leea, Krauss, Suandi and Hamza (2016) suggested that overall, mentoring (in the form of facilitation and coaching) contributed the most to new learning. In the same vein, Hezlett in Leea, et al (2016) pointed out that the mentoring relationship enables an increase in cognitive, affective and skill-based learning outcomes.

When relating skills and a statistically significant gender difference, Canary and Dindia in Rhodes et al (2008) believed that males and females tend to respond differently to helping relationships, with women placing relatively greater value on interpersonal support and intimacy than men. Monllau-Jaques, Rodríguez-Ávila and Miralles de Imperial (2014) in their findings suggested that mentored women considered, to a greater degree than men, that they have acquired and needed the ability to work in a team. However, in a more recent study conducted by Adie (2019) mentoring as an instructional approach appears not to have a differential effect on male and female students' mean achievement in Financial Accounting. The interest of this study therefore, is to investigate what effect mentoring has on skill acquisition among Business Education students in tertiary institutions in Cross River State.

Statement of the problem

Basically, instructions are delivered with the objective of causing a change in the behaviour of the students as a result of the gains in the acquisition of knowledge, experiences, skills and attitudes. However, institutions of higher learning often focus on the traditional learning approach which focus more on knowledge, neglecting the inculcation of necessary skills needed in workplace. The result of this is unemployment among school leavers especially graduates. It has always been attributed to this fact that most graduates were ill-equipped with sufficient skill for a particular job and as such are unemployed.

It is important therefore, to address this issue of unemployment among graduates by embracing a much better approach like mentoring to facilitate skill acquisition in Business Education.



Unfortunately, despite the number of studies on mentoring in the context of youth development programmes, mentoring relationship processes is not well understood, thus, the need for this study.

Research questions

The following research questions were formulated to guide the study:

1. What is the effect of mentoring approach on the mean skills acquisition score of Business Education students in tertiary institutions in Cross River State?
2. What is the effect of mentoring approach on the mean skills acquisition score of male and female Business Education students in tertiary institutions in Cross River State based on gender?

Research hypotheses

The study was guided by the following research hypotheses:

1. There is no significant difference in the mean skills acquisition score of Business Education students in tertiary institutions in Cross River State using mentoring approach and the conventional teaching approaches.
2. There is no significant difference in the mean skills acquisition score of male and female Business Education students in tertiary institutions in Cross River State.

Methods

The quasi-experimental research design was used in the study. The population of the study consisted of 534 third year Business Education students drawn from two colleges of education and two universities in Cross River State. The sample size of the study comprised 200 students (50 in each of the 4 institutions) selected using a simple random sampling technique to have equal representation. The respondents were assigned into two groups which was made up of a college of education and a university in each. One of the groups was assigned the treatment group and it comprised 100 male and female students. The order group was the control group which also comprised 100 male and female students.

Ability Test in Business Education was used as the instrument for data collection. The instrument was administered as a pilot test to similar groups of Business Education students outside the area of study. Data collected was tested for reliability using Cronbach Alpha and it produced an alpha of 0.79. The experiment followed a pre-test and post-test procedures. At the beginning, a pre-test was administered to all the respondents in both groups. After four weeks of mentoring of the experimental group and conventional teaching of the control group on the same topics in Business Education, a post-test was later administered. The scores obtained from the two administrations were used for data analysis. The research questions were answered using mean and standard deviation while, ANCOVO was used to test the hypotheses. For any of the hypotheses to be accepted the p-value was greater than 0.05 level of significant otherwise rejected.

Results

Research questions

Research question 1

What is the effect of mentoring approach on the mean skills acquisition score of Business Education students in tertiary institutions in Cross River State?

Table 1: descriptive analysis involving mentoring and conventional approaches

METHOD	\bar{X}	SD	N
Mentoring (Treatment) Method	70.09	11.75	100
Conventional (Control) Method	52.04	6.59	100

Table 1 revealed that the mean of the treatment group (mentoring) 70.09 was greater than that of the conventional method (control) 52.04. This suggested that mentoring is a superior approach compared to the conventional approach in enhancing skills acquisition in Business Education.



Research question 2

What is the effect of mentoring approach on the mean skills acquisition score of male and female Business Education students in tertiary institutions in Cross River State based on gender?

Table 2: Mean Scores of Male and Female Students in the experimental group (mentoring)

GROUP	X	SD	N
Male	79.26	13.26	50
Female	78.75	12.59	50

The result of the effect of mentoring approach on gender presented in table 2 show that the mean score of male (79.26) was very much closer to that of female (78.75) in this case, there is no pronounced effect.

Research hypotheses

Research hypothesis 1

There is no significant difference in the mean skills acquisition score of Business Education students in tertiary institutions in Cross River State using mentoring approach and the conventional teaching approaches.

Table 3: ANCOVA Summary Results for Students' Ability Test in Business Education Scores by Method

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	Mean Squares	Stg DF	Square	F	of F
Covariates	681.846	681.846	1	681.846	7.403	.006
PRE ABILITY	681.846	681.846	1	681.846	7.403	.006
Main Effects	11487.186	5743.593	2	5743.593	63.285	.000
METHODS	11120.226	11120.226	1	11120.226	122.527	.000
Explained	12,233.236	3058.309	4	3058.309	33.698	.000
Residual	7697.718	90.758	195	90.758		
Total	30,030.965	150.909	199	150.909		

In Table 3, the P-value of **0.000** was found lesser than the significant value of **0.05**. Based on the decision rule to accepted the null hypothesis if the p-value is greater than 0.05 level of significant or, otherwise rejected, the null hypothesis 1 was rejected and concluded that there is significant difference in the mean skills acquisition score of Business Education students in tertiary institutions in Cross River State between mentoring approach and the conventional approaches. This suggest that mentoring is a more effective approach to skill acquisition in Business Education.

Research hypothesis 2

There is no significant difference in the mean skills acquisition score of male and female Business Education students in tertiary institutions in Cross River State.

Table 4: ANCOVA result for students' gender analysis.

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Stg of F
Covariates	692.479	1	692.479	5.209	.027
PREABILITY	692.479	1	692.479	5.209	.027
Main Effects	248.577	1	248.577	1.861	.179
GENDER	248.577	1	248.577	1.861	.179
Explained	939.046	2	469.523	3.515	.034
Residual	12956.744	97	133.575		
Total	13901.778	99	140.422		



The result of the analysis of hypothesis 2 presented in Table 4 show that the p-value (0.179) was greater than the significant value of 0.05. Based on the stated decision rule, the null hypothesis 2 was retained and this implied that there is no significant difference in the mean skills acquisition score of male and female Business Education students in tertiary institutions in Cross River State.

Discussion

The discussion was based on the results obtained in this study which are presented in Table 1, 2, 3, and 4 respectively. In research question 1 presented in Table 1, the result suggested that mentoring is a superior approach compared to the conventional approach in enhancing skills acquisition in Business Education. Similarly, result presented in Table 3 revealed that mentoring is a more effective approach to skill acquisition in Business Education. These findings favour mentoring probably because of the purposeful support and help mentors give to mentees to enable them succeed in what they do. The findings aligned with Ayodeji (2015) that mentoring enables experienced, highly competent staff to pass their expertise on to others who need to acquire specified skills. The findings are equally supported by Bloom, Engelhart, Frust, Hill, and Krathwohl in Leea, et al (2016) that mentoring as a learning approach contribute to the acquisition of knowledge, attitude and skill.

The result of research question 2 presented in Table 2 show no pronounced effect of mentoring approach on gender as the two means were very much closer. Furthermore, the hypothesis 2 result in Table 4 suggested that there is no significant difference in the mean skills acquisition score of male and female Business Education students in tertiary institutions in Cross River State. The findings implies that mentoring approach of skills acquisition in Business Education is effective and gender friendly. This may stem from the utilization of informal strategies which mentoring relationship provide to overcome fears and mistrust between mentor and mentees. The findings agreed with Jones (2017) that mentoring is the right intervention to help create a more gender-reflective, more equal workforce, in the Police. Also, in the study of Hina, Chaudhary, Nudrat and Arshad (2017), there was no difference found in the provision of mentoring services on the basis of gender, experience and academic and professional qualification.

Conclusion

Study on skills acquisition is important because skills are the cornerstone of the learning process and integration into the world of work. That is to say skills plays a crucial role in graduates' self-empowerment and employment in the labour market. For this reason, it was important to investigate the effect of mentoring approach on skills acquisition in Business Education. Findings of the study suggest that mentoring approach is more effective than the conventional approach in skills acquisition and it is more gender friendly approach to utilize.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended that:

1. Mentoring should be fully embrace in Business Education as an approach of teaching and learning.
2. Workshops and seminars should be used to train Business Educators on mentoring.
3. Experts in the various areas of Business Education and in world of work should be brought into school to help mentor the students to acquire relevant skills.

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