

ENTREPRENEURIAL INTERPERSONAL SKILLS REQUIRED OF BUSINESS EDUCATION GRADUATES FOR EMPLOYABILITY IN BAYELSA STATE

¹ Egberi F. AKELE, PhD
frankele3@gmail.com,
Tel No. +2348061690401, +2349016338945
&

² Ebifakumor B. ALABI,
fakumork@gmail.com,
Tel. No: +2348036722751, +2349071622273

^{1 & 2} Department of Business Education, School of Vocational/Technical Education,
Isaac Jasper Boro College of Education, Sagbama Bayelsa State.

Abstract

The study examined entrepreneurial interpersonal skills required of business education graduates for employability 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 graduate entrepreneurs in Bayelsa State. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire of a four-point response scale of greatly required (GR), required (R), slightly required (SR) 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. The results showed that entrepreneurial interpersonal skills are required of business education graduates for employability in Bayelsa State. On the basis of the foregoing, the study recommended amongst other that education administrators in Nigeria should be proactive to review and update the entrepreneurship education programme to empower the students to be creators of jobs through school based enterprises.

Keywords: *Entrepreneurship Education, Skills, Entrepreneurial skills, Interpersonal Skills*

Introduction

One serious challenge most third world countries (Nigeria inclusive) are grappling with is the problem of unemployment. Others are poverty and hunger. Specifically, in Nigeria, the situation is so terrible that millions of graduates are roaming the streets in search of unavailable jobs. Both past and present governments have employed various measures to combat this deadly societal problem but to no avail. Nevertheless, government at all levels and the private sector believe that one sure route of escape from this socio-economic menace is entrepreneurship education which centres on skills acquisition for profitable engagement.

Entrepreneurship education is novel in the curriculum of higher education in Nigeria (Anannagoon, Akudo & Emetarom, 2015). Entrepreneurship education is unique in the sense that unlike many other courses, it seeks to change people's attitudes and beliefs and to equip them with the skills necessary to plan, launch and successfully manage their own business enterprises and those of others as well. Entrepreneurship education, therefore, can be

conceptualized as the type of educational process geared towards equipping students' with creative and innovative ideas that will enhance self-employment and job creation (Ibe, 2014). This kind of education inculcates in the individuals, entrepreneurial skills that enables them confront business situations in creative and innovative ways (Agu & Chiaka, 2013). Agu & Chiaka further explained that such entrepreneurial individuals create jobs for themselves and for others hereby reducing un-employment.

Skill is the ability to do something well and is usually gained through training or experience. Ezenwafor & Olaniyi (2017) defined skill as the economic tools with which entrepreneurs acquire and solve societal problems. Skills are practical activities which make an individual employable, self-reliant and be relevant to the society. Ezenwafor & Olaniyi further stated that entrepreneurs must possess these entrepreneurial business related skills which are necessary to enable them start their own business enterprises. Skills are those activities that will enable entrepreneurs to manage their own businesses. Skill according to Ezeani (2014) is the art of possessing power, authority or competency to do a task required of an individual on the job. It is the expertness, aptitude and competencies appropriate for a particular job. This has to do with expert knowledge and creative reasoning to a level of master.

Entrepreneurial skills are the ability of an individual to exploit an idea and create an enterprise not only for personal gain but also for social and development gain (Olagunju. 2014). Entrepreneurial skills are, therefore, skills related to creativity, innovation, interpersonal, personal characteristics, invention, practical and marketing skills (Inyannah, 2012). These skills enable graduates to become self-employed entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurial skills training is the development of personal qualities that are quite different from entrepreneurship development which provide training in the process of business creation. Adidu & Olaniye (2006) see entrepreneurial skills training as a specialized training given to people to acquire the skills, ideas and the managerial abilities and capabilities for self-employment rather than seeking employment for pay.

Entrepreneurial skills training is a deliberate attempt to provide trainees with relevant knowledge of appropriate skills, competencies and right attitude to effectively run or manage a business outfit. Skill development, according to Agoha (2011) includes the abilities to perform activities that are related to some meaningful exercises, works or jobs. Entrepreneurial skill training programmes provides the basis for starting and operating small businesses. The training helps the youths to develop the skills associated with entrepreneurship such as the ability to take initiative, creatively seek out and identify business opportunities, develop budgets and forecast resource needs, understand various options for acquiring capital and the trade-offs associated with each option and communicate effectively and market oneself and one's ideas.

Entrepreneurial interpersonal skills are social skills. They are a set of skills that people use when interacting and communicating with one another. These skills show up in countless interactions, from public speaking, group projects and team presentation to professional writing. Interpersonal skills have played the single largest role in determining the outcome of

every situation. When investors decide to invest in companies, they are not just investing in an idea, they are investing just as much in the people behind the idea. Poor interpersonal skills can ruin sale, even if the product or service one is selling is worth twice its value. It is important to practice and improve interpersonal skills because they are the foundation of building relationship with others. Interpersonal skills are critical for any business owner or entrepreneur to possess because the job involves communication, interacting and selling to customers (Jeffrey, 2016). These interpersonal skills and skills individuals continuously need to polish and improve upon. Interpersonal skills include the ability to work in teams, help others to learn, provide customer service, negotiate agreements, resolve differences and work in a multi-cultural nation (SCAN, 2010).

According to Shahbaz (2015) inter-personal skills refer to skills that influence the ability of an employee to get along well with others while getting the job done. Interpersonal skills include everything from communication to interaction. The possession of entrepreneurial interpersonal skills by an entrepreneur makes that individual to be successful in the operation of small and medium enterprises. To be a successful entrepreneur, there is need to constantly develop interaction with people including customers and clients, employees, suppliers, shareholders, investors, lawyers and more. The ability to establish and maintain positive relationship is crucial to the success of the entrepreneur's business venture.

Interpersonal skills are the ability to motivate others to achieve organizational goals (Schermerhor, 2008). Entrepreneurial interpersonal skills are the leadership skills that give the entrepreneurs the ability to convince others to believe in their vision. The interpersonal skills possessed by individual entrepreneurs make them to be competent in all types of communications to able to communicate well to sell one's vision and co-operate in team membership. Such entrepreneurs have good listening ability, good personal relations that are emotionally intelligent and good negotiation in their business operations towards success and goal oriented. According to Shahbaz (2015), these interpersonal skills are behavioural in nature and have the following competencies such as self-awareness, that is being aware of one's own needs, values and emotions and their impact on one's behaviour, self-management, keeping one's emotional reactions on check and being able to behave correctly when one experience feelings that could result in critical behaviour, social awareness being in tune with other's feelings and needs. Jeffrey (2016), states that utilizing the following five interpersonal skills will help an entrepreneur to be a better business owner and be a more effective communicator. These five interpersonal skills are:

- a. **relationship building skills.** Building and maintaining relationships is the key to running a successful business. This means that, the entrepreneur builds trust, gives and receives feedback and develops empathy for the customers.
- b. **Assertiveness** in asking for what the individual wants or problem solving in a direct and respectful manner that gets one's point of view across clearly. Being assertive allows one express one's vision, communicate the plan and clearly define objectives with confidence.
- c. **Effective communicator**, that is communicating effectively is the ability to stay calm, focused, polite, interested and to match the mood or emotion of the situation.

- d. Self-management and emotional intelligence*; being a business owner means stepping up and accepting responsibility as a leader. Self-management is the pillar and foundation of leadership.
- e. Active listener*, this means being fully engaged in conversations, giving non-verbal cues and being able to repeat back to the customer exactly what one heard. It is about being present in the exchange and showing genuine attentiveness and concern for the customers' feelings and requests. According to Jeffrey (2016), learning, understanding and practicing these five interpersonal skills will give the entrepreneur the confidence and poise to conduct daily business interactions and manage customers leading to business success.

Statement of the Problem

The major problems Nigeria, as a nation, is contending with are un-employment, poverty and hunger with their socio-economic consequences where millions of graduates are in search of non-available jobs. Due to this socio-economic problem, government at all levels came up with an educational system which seeks to equip the students with entrepreneurial skills to equip them adequately for the world of work. This is with a view to closing the gap between the training given to students in schools and the skill expected of them in the real business world. Despite this effort, there seems to be no clear evidence that the graduates from schools possess the required entrepreneurial skills to be employable in Small and Medium-Scale Enterprises (SMEs). This is the problem the study is set to address.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study was to determine entrepreneurial interpersonal skills required of business education graduates for self-employability in Bayelsa State. Specifically, the study is set to determine the SMEs operators' rating of the entrepreneurial interpersonal skills required of business education graduates for employability in Bayelsa State.

Research Question

The following research question guided the study.

1. What entrepreneurial interpersonal skills are required of Business Education graduates for employability in Bayelsa State?

Hypothesis

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

H_{01} : There is no significant difference in the mean responses of experienced and less experienced SMEs operators regarding entrepreneurial interpersonal skills required of Business Education graduates for employability in Bayelsa State.

Method

The study adopted survey research design because the study relied on the use of questionnaire to elicit the opinions of the respondents. 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 Greatly Required (GR), Required (R), Slightly Required (SR) and Not Required (NR). The reliability of the instrument was ensured using Cronbach Alpha techniques and the internal consistency of 0.82 for the instrument was gotten. Out of the 162 copies of the questionnaire administered to the respondents, by the researchers and two research assistants, a total of 155 copies (representing 95.7%) were correctly filled and used for data analysis. 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 the 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 entrepreneurial interpersonal skills are required of Business Education graduates for employability in Bayelsa State?*

Table 1: Mean Ratings of the Responses of Respondents on Entrepreneurial Interpersonal Skills Required of Business Education Graduates for Employability in Bayelsa State (n=155)

S/N	Items on Interpersonal Skills	π	SD	Remarks
1.	Ability to work in team.	3.37	0.49	Required
2.	Ability to help other to learn.	3.35	0.54	Required
3.	Ability to provide customer services.	3.65	0.47	Required
4.	Ability to negotiate agreement.	3.33	0.48	Required
5.	Ability to resolve differences among employees.	3.29	0.70	Required
6.	Having good listening ability.	3.58	0.53	Required
7.	Ability to build great relationships among employees.	3.65	0.52	Required
8.	Ability to employ effective communication principles in business situations.	3.40	0.60	Required
9.	Ability of being eloquent on business transactions	3.68	0.46	Required
10.	Ability to convince others to believe in one's vision	3.64	0.52	Required
11.	Ability to motivate others to achieve organizational goals.	3.67	0.47	Required
12.	Ability to communicate effectively	3.56	0.58	Required
Grand Mean		3.51	0.53	

Note: π means, NR Not Required, R Required.

The results in *Table 1* show that all the twelve items achieved the real limit number of 2.50 and above. This indicates that the respondents agreed that all the twelve identified skills are required for Business Education graduates for employability in Bayelsa State as perceived by the Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (SMEs) operators. The standard deviation of the twelve items ranges between 0.46 to 0.70. 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.

Ho₁: There is no significant difference in the mean responses of experienced and less experienced SMEs operators regarding entrepreneurial interpersonal skills required of business education graduate for employability in Bayelsa State.

Table 2: T-Test Summary If the Mean Ratings of Experienced and Less Experienced SMEs Operators Regarding Entrepreneurial Interpersonal Skills Required of Business Education Graduates for Employability in Bayelsa State

S/N	NO	π	SD	t-cal	t-crit	Level of Sig	Remark
1. Experience	61	3.55	0.48	0.40	1.96	0.05	Accepted
2. Less experience	94	3.46	0.52				

The results in **Table 2** reveal that at 0.05 level of significance, the t-calculated of 0.40 is less than t-critical value of 1.96. Hence, the hypothesis is accepted. This implies that there is no significant difference in the mean responses of experienced and less experienced SMEs operators regarding entrepreneurial interpersonal skills required of Business Education graduates for employability in Bayelsa State.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of the study revealed that all the twelve entrepreneurial interpersonal skills were required of Business Education graduates for employability in Bayelsa State. The findings of the study agreed with that of Okafor (2013) that superior interpersonal skills of the entrepreneurs which are often lacking and therefore, they are highly required by entrepreneurs for effective implementation of business plan.

The findings on the hypothesis tested showed that there is no significant difference in the mean responses of experienced and less experienced SMEs operators regarding entrepreneurial interpersonal skills required of Business Education graduates for employability in Bayelsa State. The findings of this study agreed with the result of Okeke (2016) who found that level of experience is not a significant source of difference in teachers' perception of entrepreneurial skills required of secondary school levers in Edo State.

Conclusion

In Nigeria today, the need of the society is the creation of more jobs, not just by the government but also young graduates. Unfortunately, the entrepreneurial skills training given to students while in school and which is expected to equip them adequately for the world of work on graduation seems to be inadequate. Consequently, this study investigated the entrepreneurial interpersonal skills required of Business Education graduates for employability in Bayelsa State. From the findings of the study, it is concluded that possession of critical entrepreneurial interpersonal skills by Business Education graduates will greatly boost their acceptability for work in corporate organizations for sustainable living.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made. That

- a) education administrators in Nigeria should be proactive to review and update the entrepreneurship education curriculum so as to equip individuals to be creators of jobs through school based enterprises;
- b) government at all levels should promote in the youths the need for skills acquisition for self-reliance through the establishment of enterprises, colleges and skill acquisition centres for youths in our local governments headquarters and villages; and
- c) Business educators should properly package the identified entrepreneurial interpersonal skills into specific objectives for the training of undergraduates while in school for entrepreneurship development who will in turn serve as drivers of the Nigeria economy.

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