

Full Length Research Paper

Entrepreneurial skills for business education graduates' employability in Cross River State, Nigeria

Akeke M. N. G.^{1*}, Oche P. E.¹, Akuegwu B. A.², and Ushie P. U.²

¹Department of Vocational Education, Faculty of Education, University of Calabar, Calabar.

²Department of Educational Management, University of Calabar, Calabar.

Received 8 December, 2021; Accepted 20 January, 2022

This study examined the differences between the responses of federal and state universities on entrepreneurial skills required for business education graduates' employability in Cross River State. Specifically, the study examined the difference between the responses of federal universities and state universities on planning skills, marketing skills and management skills on the business education graduates' employability in Cross River State, Nigeria. The population of this study consists of 2,575 business education students in the two public universities in Calabar. The sample of this study consists of 256 business education students drawn from the department of business education of the two public universities in Calabar, representing 10% of the total population. The results of the analysis revealed that there is no significant difference between students of the two universities. Findings also revealed that there is significant difference between students of the two universities on marketing skills and business management skills for business education graduates' employability in Cross River State. Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended among others that teachers should include activities that will enhance planning skills of students.

Key words: Entrepreneurial skills, employability, planning, management skills.

INTRODUCTION

An entrepreneur is someone who has innovative ability, creates something new and different, seeks opportunities, starts a business, takes risks, develops ideas and manages available resources to succeed. Entrepreneurs are agents that overcome obstacles to build their enterprises in an entrepreneurial relationship by being change agents through recognition of opportunities, exploring it through innovation and creativity (Okute,

2020). Anyone who has the knowledge, skills and possess such personal qualities, attitudes, values, and behaviors necessary to perform activities and task to be self-reliant is known as an entrepreneur. The core of entrepreneurship is to create new values, which enhances different creative thinking and innovative actions as well as create opportunities needed in the society. It is needful for an entrepreneur to be competent because customers

*Corresponding author. E-mail: mercyaakeke64@gmail.com. Tel: +2347084096251.

are looking for satisfaction which cannot be achieved without it.

Competency underlies the authors understanding and interpretation of many day-to-day educational practices, including most recently entrustable professional activities (Zubin, 2019). Competencies are assessed in terms of actual behavior observed in the workplace and are usually defined in terms of underlying personal characteristics like traits, knowledge, skills and attitudes of the individual managers. Entrepreneurs and managers share similar roles and tasks in many aspects like organizing and planning competencies. In recent years, the competency approach of business education students has become an increasingly popular means of studying entrepreneurial characteristics.

Entrepreneurial competencies of business education students could contribute to economic welfare as they increase the innovative capacity of the economy. This is acquired through entrepreneurial education. Entrepreneurship Education reduces the high level of rural-urban migration, to offer functional education for the people that will enable them to be self-employed and self-reliant, to provide the youth adequate training that will enable them to be more creative and innovative in identifying noble business opportunities (Akeke and Eyo, 2018).

Moreover, through entrepreneurship, new businesses and jobs are created, which is of critical importance in today's global business environment. Adding to this, Low and MacMillan (2018) viewed that new firm's creation is a critical driving force of economic growth, creating hundreds of thousands of new jobs, as well as enhancing federal and local tax revenues, boosting exports, and generally increasing national productivity. Entrepreneurial competency aimed at identifying the characteristics of a good and effective entrepreneurial so that organizations can be successful. Strategic planning competencies relates to setting, evaluating and implementing the strategies of the firm, while calling for abilities and skills from a broader and long-term perspective. Another type of competency business education students should possess for effective business management is opportunity competencies. The most distinguishing competencies for the entrepreneur is the competency which is related to the opportunity available for him to change the world. For instance, McClelland (2017) finds "to see and act on opportunities" as one of the competencies for successful entrepreneurs. This category of competencies comprises of the entrepreneurial activities in spotting opportunities, actively seeking new opportunities, and developing the opportunities which makes it a must acquire virtue for business education graduates.

Business education is a branch of education that involves teaching the skills and operations of the business industry. This field of education occurs at multiple levels, including secondary and higher education

institutes. Education in business has many forms, mainly occurring within a classroom of a school. A business education has many components, as there are many different areas of the business industry as a whole. An education in business varies greatly in its curriculum and popularity around the world. Career development is often an integral part of an education in business. Business education generally refers to the plethora of courses designed to provide students with any number of skills needed for success in business, especially those related to launching and running businesses.

Business educators play a prominent role in preparing students to become responsible citizens, capable of making the astute economic decisions that will benefit their personal and professional lives. Business education teachers introduce students to the basics of personal finance, the decision-making techniques needed to be wise consumers, the economic principles of an increasingly international marketplace, and the processes by which businesses operate. In addition, these standards provide a solid educational foundation for students who want to successfully complete college programs in various business disciplines. The standards are based on a vision and a set of competencies designed to prepare students to become knowledgeable and ethical decision makers as they fulfill their roles as consumers, workers, and citizens (Okolo, 2015). It is based on this premise that the researcher intends to examine entrepreneurial competencies required by business education students in University Calabar, Nigeria.

Strategic competencies refers to well planned, premeditated, tactical and calculated business skills an entrepreneur requires to enable him manage his business effectively. There are required for sufficiency of knowledge and skills that enable someone to act in a wide variety of situations. Business education students are expected to be strategic in their quest for a successful business. Every entrepreneur will not succeed without strategic competencies. Because each level of responsibility has its own requirements, competence can occur at any stage of his or her business. In the same manner, strategic competencies acquired by entrepreneurs would help them lead a successful and responsible business and would help them sustain and grow their new businesses once developed.

Creative and innovative process constitutes strategic competencies. This can only be done by people who have a passion and an entrepreneurial attitude, namely: those who believe themselves (confident, optimistic, and full commitment), initiative (energetic and confident), has the achievement motive (oriented results and future), leadership (dare to be different), and willing to take risks with the full calculation. Strategic entrepreneurial competencies are also the attitude and behavior of people in addition to innovative, initiative, able to take risks, behave anticipatory, and profit-oriented. Strategic

competence is an essential entrepreneurial competence undertaken by entrepreneurs such as: planning of activities to be carried out and execution of activity on step by step process of achieving the goals of a business organization. In fact, these skills enhance the employability of graduates and as such an important tool for the success of an entrepreneur. Employability skills according to Ajuluchukwu and Osakwe (2019) are range of abilities or competencies that one may develop during one's life through education, training, work experiences interest and extra-curricular activities.

LITERATURE REVIEW

It is apparent that small and medium-sized enterprises play an important role in developing economies of nations, with a focus on the micro to small enterprises (Leithy, 2017). In a study carried out by Abdulkareem (2016) who investigated the differences in entrepreneurial competencies and effective business management among business education students in Usman Danfodio University, Sokoto, Sokoto State which employed cross-sectional design, a sample of 235 students consisting of 115 male and 120 females was drawn from the population using simple random sampling technique. The instrument used was interview questions and a questionnaire titled: Entrepreneurial Skills and Effective Business Management Questionnaire (TTSPLOQ). The data collected were analyzed using one-way (ANOVA) and tested at varying degrees of freedom. It was discovered that there exist difference in entrepreneurial skills and effective business management among business education students.

In a study conducted by Ekpo (2016) on strategic competencies in managing their businesses, the overall result indicates a significant relationship between entrepreneurship competencies and business growths business education students. A successful entrepreneur should be visionary enough to see his established firm's goals and objective being attained. He/she should be able to identify the opportunities and act on to capture those opportunities utilizing a set of Entrepreneurial Competencies. He/she should be able to lead his established enterprise through the path towards success. In a study by Ekop (2014) on the relationship between; entrepreneurship skills and business growth of business education students in the University of Uyo, Akwa-Ibom State. The results showed that 56% of those sampled have strategic competencies in managing their businesses. The overall results indicate a significant relationship between entrepreneurship competencies and business growths business education students. Creating strategic entrepreneurial competencies model requires small and medium-sized enterprises to play an important role in developing the economies of nations as literature reveals. A successful entrepreneur should be visionary

enough to see his established firm's goals and objective being attained. He/she should be able to identify the opportunities and act on to capture those opportunities utilizing a set of Entrepreneurial Competencies. He/she should be able to lead his established enterprise through the path towards success. This requires the entrepreneur to establish a set of business and management competencies, and in order to do so, he/she should be able to select the right team to help him achieve the goals, which requires the Entrepreneur to have some level of strategic competencies to be developed. Throughout the life of his newly established enterprise, he/she will need to sell his ideas to different stakeholders, which requires him/her to have a certain level of business development and conceptual and relationship competencies. Strategic competence indicates sufficiency of knowledge and skills that enable someone to act in a wide variety of situations, because each level of responsibility has its own requirements.

Marketing skills are skills applied to traditional marketing functions like advertising, sales, promotion, public relations, marketing research and brand management. These skills are highly valued by entrepreneurs in almost all sectors of the economy and job market. An entrepreneur is expected to persuade the public of the quality of his/her brand, thereby ensuring the product sells. In all cases, entrepreneurs need to assess and understand the needs and preferences of stakeholders and persuade others to take appropriate action. Promoting any product, service, or idea encompasses many different marketing skills and personal qualities. The process begins with analyzing the audience and defining their perceptions of the product, service or idea. Identifying those features or aspects of what you are marketing that will be most appealing to your audience is essential. Verbal, writing and public speaking skills, when refined, will help the entrepreneur to convey the pitch clearly, and creativity will help to capture the attention of the audience.

Comparing marketing skill and human relations competence and how they influence entrepreneurial productivity in Northern Senatorial District of Ondo State was done by James (2015). The study adopted descriptive design. Stratified random sampling technique was used in drawing sample for the study. A sample of 200 young entrepreneurs was selected from the population 2674 entrepreneurs. It was discovered that the marketing competence had higher mean than human relations competence and a significant difference was found between the two methods. It found also that marketing competence significantly influence entrepreneurial productivity. This implies that business education students are expected to have both human relations competence and marketing competence for them to be able to run their own businesses upon graduation.

Similarly, Ibrahim and Mohammed (2015) examined the

acquisition of marketing skills and entrepreneurs' abilities to run their own businesses successfully in Yola Adamawa State, Nigeria. The population of the study consists of 7720 entrepreneurs in the area of study. A sample of 250 entrepreneurs was drawn from the population using stratified random sampling technique. Correlation analysis was carried out to ascertain the relationship between the two variables. The results indicate a significant relationship between acquisition of marketing skills and entrepreneurs' abilities to run their own businesses successfully.

Through literature reviewed and SME input, the researchers were able to identify several competencies that contribute to achieving Entrepreneurs Success. The statistical results show two most significant competency groups impacting the Entrepreneurial success: Human Relations Competencies affecting three distinct success dimensions: Ability to attract outside capital, growth in revenues and growth in customer base. While the second was the Business and Management Competencies affecting three distinct success parameters: ability to attract outside capital, growth in revenues and providing value added product or service towards creating an entrepreneur competencies model. It was also observed that marketing competence of an entrepreneur play a significant role in effective business management among entrepreneurs. Micro and small-sized enterprises are created and fostered by new businessmen that enjoy the vision, the energy and the courage to create a new business, support and grow their businesses. Business education students have certain characteristics, traits and competencies that enable them see the opportunities, are courageous enough to help themselves enter a market full of rivals, and visionary enough to be distinguished from their competitors in a world of aggressive businesses approaches to consumers.

Statement of the problem

The issue and rate of unemployment is quite alarming. More than half business education students graduating from the universities each year are left without job and most of them lacks employability skills needed to perform in the employment market thereby exposed them untold poverty and hardship. Unemployment has been of great concern to parents, government, international bodies, and non-governmental organizations. Despite all effort of the government, parents, international organization programmes, and non-governmental organizations to cushion the high rate of joblessness, yet, unemployment is recorded yearly. As a result of this, it becomes necessary to find out the causes of such level of unemployment among graduates particularly business education graduates. One wonders if the situation is a result of lack of the requisite skills for employability such as strategic planning skills, marketing skills, business

management skills. Business management is also considered here because the researchers observed that some of these graduate cannot even run their own business. Several researches had suggested that students' manpower development seem to yield little or no result. International organizations keep sending monies to Africa in an attempt to ameliorate the increasing effect of joblessness. The problem of this study could be posed as; do entrepreneurial competencies enhance business education students' skills in business operation? Hence, this study is geared toward investigating entrepreneurial competencies required by business education students in public Universities in Cross River State.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study was to examine entrepreneurial skills required by business education students in public Universities in Cross River State. Specifically, the study seeks to examine the difference between the responses of:

- 1) Strategic planning skills required by business education graduates' employability in Cross River State.
- 2) Marketing skills required by business education graduates' employability in Cross River State
- 3) Business management skills required by business education graduates' employability in Cross River State

Research questions

The following research questions were formulated to direct the study;

- 1) What is the difference between federal university and state university students' responses on strategic planning skills for business education graduates' employability in Cross River State?
- 2) What is the difference between federal university and state university students' responses on marketing skills for business education graduates' employability in Cross River State?
- 3) What is the difference between federal university and state university students' responses on business management skills for business education graduates' employability in Cross River State?

Statement of hypotheses

The following null hypotheses are stated to guide the study;

H₀₁: There is no significant difference between federal university and state university students' responses on

Table 1. Independent t-test analysis of difference between federal university and state university students' responses on strategic planning skills for business education graduates' employability in Cross River State (n = 258).

| Variable | N | \bar{x} | SD | DF | Critical r | r-cal. |
|-----------------------------|-----|-----------|-------|-----|------------|--------|
| Federal University students | 111 | 18.792 | 2.767 | 256 | 1.968 | 1.964* |
| State University students | 147 | 17.088 | 3.068 | | | |

Significant at 0.05.

strategic planning skills for business education graduates' employability in Cross River State.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference between federal university and state university students' responses on marketing skills for business education graduates' employability in Cross River State.

H₀₃: There is no significant difference between federal university students and state university students on business management skills for business education graduates' employability in Cross River State.

METHODOLOGY

The research design adopted for this study was survey research design. Survey research design is the collection of data to accurately and objectively describe existing phenomena. The design was considered most appropriate because it is directed toward determining the nature of the situation as it exists at the time of investigation. The area of the study is Cross River University of Technology and University of Calabar, Calabar Campus. The population of this study consists of 2,575 business education students in the two public universities in Calabar. The sampling technique adopted for this study was simple random sampling. Simple random sampling was most preferred because it gives every member of the population equal chance of being selected. The hat and draw method (balloting) was adopted. 128 business education students were drawn from each university giving a total sample of 256 business education students randomly drawn from the departments of business education of the two public universities in Calabar, representing 10% of the total population. The instrument used for this study was a well-structured questionnaire titled: Entrepreneurial Skill and Business Education Graduates Employability Questionnaire (ESBEGEQ). The 24-items questionnaire was structured on a modified four point likert scale of strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly agree and eight items for each variable. Independent t-test was adopted for data analysis.

RESULTS

The three hypotheses were analyzed using independent t-test and tested at 0.05 level of significance and 256 degrees of freedom. The results are presented in Tables 1 to 3.

Hypothesis one (H₀₁)

The result in Table 1 showed that the calculated t - value

of 1.964 was less than the critical t - value of 1.968 when tested at 0.05 level of significance and 256 degrees of freedom. With this result, the null hypothesis was retained. This implies that there no is significant difference between federal university and state university students' responses on strategic planning skills for business education graduates' employability in Cross River State.

Hypothesis two (H₀₂)

The result in Table 2 indicate that the calculated t - value of 2.211 was greater than the critical t - value of 1.968 when tested at 0.05 level of significance with 258 degrees of freedom. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. Hence, there is significant difference between federal university and state university students' responses on marketing skills for business education graduates' employability in Cross River State.

Hypothesis three (H₀₃)

The result in Table 3 indicates that the calculated t - value of 3.229 was greater than the critical t - value of 1.968 at 0.05 level of significance and 256 degrees of freedom. By this result, the null hypothesis was rejected. Hence, there is significant difference between federal university and state university students' responses on business management skills for business education graduates' employability in Cross River State.

DISCUSSION

There is no significant difference between strategic planning skills for business education graduates' employability in Cross River State. This finding suggest that students from the two university of the view that strategic planning skills could impact on business education graduates' employability equally. This agrees with the study carried out by Abdulkareem (2016) who investigated the differences in entrepreneurial competencies and effective business management among business education students in Usman Danfodio University, Sokoto, Sokoto State which employed cross-

Table 2. Independent t-test analysis of difference between federal university and state university students' responses on marketing skills for business education graduates' employability in Cross River State. n = 258.

| Variable | N | \bar{x} | SD | DF | Critical r- | r-cal. |
|-----------------------------|-----|-----------|-------|-----|-------------|--------|
| Federal University students | 111 | 21.434 | 5.205 | 256 | 1.968 | 2.211* |
| State University students | 147 | 20.123 | 4.163 | | | |

Significant at 0.05.

Table 3. Independent t-test analysis of difference between federal university and state university students' responses on business management skills for business education graduates' employability in Cross River State. n = 258.

| Variable | N | \bar{x} | SD | DF | Critical r | r-cal. |
|-----------------------------|-----|-----------|-------|-----|------------|--------|
| Federal University students | 111 | 20.529 | 4.583 | 256 | 1.968 | 3.229* |
| State University students | 147 | 18.669 | 4.591 | | | |

Significant at 0.05.

sectional design, a sample of 235 students consisting of 115 male and 120 females was drawn from the population using simple random sampling technique. The instrument used was interview questions and a questionnaire titled: Entrepreneurial Skills and Effective Business Management Questionnaire (TTSPLOQ). The data collected were analyzed using one-way (ANOVA) and tested at varying degrees of freedom. It was discovered that there exist difference in entrepreneurial skills and effective business management among business education students.

This finding is in consonance with the finding of Ekpo (2016) whose finding indicated that 56% of those sampled have strategic competencies in managing their businesses. The overall results indicate a significant relationship between entrepreneurship competencies and business growths business education students. A successful entrepreneur should be visionary enough to see his established firm's goals and objective being attained. He/she should be able to identify the opportunities and act on to capture those opportunities utilizing a set of Entrepreneurial Competencies. He/she should be able to lead his established enterprise through the path towards success. This requires the entrepreneur to establish a set of business and management competencies, and in order to do so, he/she should be able to select the right team to help him achieve the goals, which requires the Entrepreneur to have some level of strategic competencies to be developed.

Again, James (2015) who compared marketing competence and human relations competence and how they influence entrepreneurial productivity in Northern Senatorial District of Ondo State, found out that that marketing competence significantly influence entrepreneurial productivity. It was further discovered that there exist difference in entrepreneurial skills and effective business management among business

education students.

Conclusion

This study investigated entrepreneurial skills and business education graduates' employability in Cross River State. Entrepreneurial skills such as planning skills, marketing skills, management skills and others are requisite skills to enable individuals to perform in any trade. It helps in running and managing personal business, and also serves as an employee. Entrepreneurial skills are regarded as employability skills because there are those demonstrable skills and the technical know-how skills that an employer want to see in the employees. From the results of this study, it has been established that there is significant difference between the responses of students on entrepreneurial skills required for business education graduates' employability in Cross River State from the two universities studied.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made:

- 1) Strategic planning is an essential skill for business education graduates' employability. Hence, teachers should include activities that will enhance planning skills of students.
- 2) Every business education student should be made to carry out mini project that will expose them to practical marketing activities capable of improving their employability level in the area of marketing.
- 3) Students should be engage in learning activities that will exposed them to practical business management

skills needed for a successful entrepreneurs upon graduation.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The authors have not declared any conflicts of interests.

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