

Entrepreneurship Skills Acquired for Employability by Business Education Graduates in Rivers State Universities

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ABSTRACT

The study assessed entrepreneurship skills acquired for employability by Business Education graduates in Rivers State Universities. The descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. The population of the study consisted of forty (40) Postgraduate Masters students. The entire population was studied, and no sampling was done as the population size was considered manageable by the researchers. The instrument for data collection was a self-structured questionnaire. The instrument was validated by three experts. The reliability of the instrument was established using Cronbach's Alpha Method which yielded an aggregate coefficient of 0.80. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer research questions, while hypotheses was tested using t-test inferential statistics. Findings revealed that there is a statistical significant relationship between entrepreneurship skills acquired by Business Education graduate students in Rivers State Universities and their employability. Also, finding revealed that Postgraduate Masters students in Rivers State University and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education do not differ significantly in their mean responses regarding entrepreneurship skills acquired for employability. Based on the findings, it was recommended among others that: Business Education students in Universities should be given awareness by their lecturers on the need to acquire entrepreneurship skills. Also, Business Educators should train students to be equipped with entrepreneurship skills that will enable them function in the world of work.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship Education, Entrepreneurship Skills, Employability, Business Education Graduates

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INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurship is a clear manifestation of effective manipulation of human intelligence as demonstrated in creative performance (Shaibu & Mbaegbu, 2012). It is the key to personal

fulfillment, wealth creation, human capacity development and financial empowerment (Bamidele, 2013), and the ability to create new ideas, products or services for personal self-reliance and to meet the needs of the society and the ability to set up a business enterprise as different, developing and projecting a business plan for economic stability (Shaiabu, Ogwuche & Ugochukwu, 2016).

Entrepreneurship is the totality of self-asserting attributes that aid an individual to map out latent business opportunities in conjunction with the capacity to recognize requisite resources with which to profitably take advantage of such opportunities in the face of calculated risk and uncertainty (Nwosu & Ohia, 2019). It is a formal or informal structured learning that inculcates in students/trainees the ability to identify, observe and seize available opportunities in the environment in addition to skill acquisition (Ossai & Nwalado, 2012), and the process of organizing, managing and assuming the risks of a business (Bolarinwa & Akambi, 2004). Olawale and Kaegon (2012) opined that entrepreneurship prepares the youths to be responsible individuals who become entrepreneurs or entrepreneurial thinkers by exposing them to real life learning experience where they will be required to think. While some regard entrepreneurship as risk-bearing, other view entrepreneurship as the application of personal enterprising skills, attributes and mindset to the context of setting up a new venture or initiative of any kind, developing and growing existing ventures or initiative and designing an entrepreneurial organization capable of using enterprising skills (Val-Ossai & Akpomi in Ogwunte, 2023). Entrepreneurship is the key to personal fulfillment, wealth creation, human capacity development and financial empowerment (Bamidele, 2013), and the ability to create new ideas, products or services for personal self-reliance and to meet the needs of society and the ability to set up a business enterprise as different, developing and projecting a business plan for economic stability (Shaiabu, Ogwuche & Ugochukwu, 2016). Entrepreneurship plays a vital role in ascertaining the growth and development of a nation as no nation can thrive economically without inculcating an entrepreneurial activity to a large extent. It is the means of stimulating economic growth through generation of greater employment opportunities. The entrepreneurship concept focuses upon the application of personal and enterprising skills such as creative thinking and innovative skills amongst others.

Creative thinking skills refers to the ability to think, contemplate, imagine, dream and conceive new and appropriate ideas and the implication of such ideas in solving existing problems or preventing envisaged problems. It is the development of both innate ability and skills born out of constant practice or training (Egbeke, 2017; Emezue, 2017). Obando, Abdul, Bangura, Obando, Munene and Shisanya (2019) supported this view by stating that creative thinking is not only the ability to come up with new ideas but also narrowing down n those ideas to transcend to focus on one that can be elaborated (thinking and then producing) while Hamid, Wennberg and Berglung (2018) noted that creativity is combination of abilities, skills, motivation, attitudes and other factors. This is why Shisanya in Obando, Abdul, Karirn, Bangura, Munene and Shisanya (2019) believed that techniques for enhancing creativity involved divergent thinking and general problem solving heuristics. Creative thinking skill is the ability to create work that is different and appropriate and not only seen as the power to produce new innovative ideas and or bring into existence something new or to proffer new solutions to an existing problem (Barrow, 2020).

Amabile (2016) went further to state that in order to be considered creative, a product or an idea must be different from what has been done before but the product or idea cannot be merely different for difference sake, it must also be appropriate to the goal at hand, correct, valuable, or expressive of meaning. Lefton (2014) define creative thinking basically as a term that implies the process of developing original, novel, and appropriate response to problems. Creativity allows the organization to take advantage of opportunities which develop as the result of changing environmental conditions. Creativity plays an important role in new product development and creativity consist three techniques: brainstorming, visual confrontation morphological techniques (Salavou, Baitas & Lioukas, 2014). According to Umoh (2019) creativity is a process by which a symbolic domain in the culture is changed. For example, creativity involves new songs, new ideas, a new machine. Umoh added that creativity is marked by the ability to create and bring in existence, to invest into a new enterprise and to produce through imaginative skills. In a nutshell creativity encompasses innovation.

Creative thinking skills consequently, is a condition which is determined and practised within the context that person's desires (Eysenck, 2008). Okoro (2018) identified creativity as a transverse skill that could be developed in learners using appropriate teaching method. According to Umar and Norashidah (2017), creativity skill implies an attribute that pays attention to issues such as self-esteem, the locus of control, the impact of internal and outside influences on the consequences of actions, inflexibility, and self-centredness. The scholars further stated that curiosity, imagination, challenge - taking and risk taking attitudes are very conducive to creativity development. Research as well indicates that creative skills people are exposed to new experiences and that divergent thinking leads to novel and useful thoughts (Berglund & Wennberg, 2006).

Creative thinking skill is therefore central to entrepreneurial process. It is that capability of an entrepreneur to venture into new business, to bring new products into the market, open new offices, branches, test new technology and venture into new markets. Creative thinking has been viewed as the construction of ideas or products which are new and potentially useful. These ideas can be internally or externally located, although the entrepreneur will tend to search and identify potential solutions shaped in part by internal competencies (Fillis & Rentschler, 2010). Creative thinking skill is an essential ingredient in entrepreneurial pursuit and it is indispensable in this era of few jobs or no jobs at all. Entrepreneurial aspect of the technical and vocational manpower training should therefore incorporate skills in establishing, managing and sustaining businesses, at both individual and partnership levels to foster innovation and increase productivity.

Innovation is defined as the skill introducing of new things, ideas, or ways of doing things/something, which is yet to be carried out by anyone or that is unique. Innovation is described as the introduction of new or improved processes, products or services based on new scientific or technology knowledge and/or organizational know-how (Rebound, 2008). Many companies today because of the competitive nature of the market are innovative bringing about new ideas and modifying existing ones into their offerings. Innovative Skills are creative skills to enable graduate to introduce something new, to generate ideas of doing things different from the way such is being done before. This skill makes individual to think of a new product, good and services that will be of great benefit to the society. When students are trained to develop such skills, they will contribute positively to their nation's economic growth and development through job creation.

Marnix (2016) states that there exist features that are peculiar to innovation, though some products catch on immediately, whereas others take a longer time to gain acceptance. Marnix listed these features as relative advantage which is the degree to which innovation appears superior to existing product, compatibility which is the degree to which the innovation can go with existing product of the organization, complexity which defines the innovativeness portrays individual willingness and a tendency to achieve the desired innovation demonstrated in terms of behaviors, strategies, activities and processes. As a consequence, innovativeness usually results in new or changes in idea generation. Accordingly, the impact of individual innovativeness on its performance depends on the degree of innovation that is being pursued. It has been argued that more substantial and radical types of innovation tend to have a significant impact on individual overall performance, while incremental innovation seems to have a low and short term impacts because such innovation usually concentrate on minor or process improvement initiatives.

The goal of innovation is positive change that leads to increased productivity which is fundamental source of increase in business performance (Brown & Ulijn, 2014). Similarly, Tidd and Bessant (2011) posit that innovation is driven by ability to see connections, spot opportunities and to take advantage of them by creating completely new possibilities through radical breakthroughs in technology. Innovation, by nature, is fundamentally about entrepreneurship. It contributes severally to the growth and development of new firms and or new organizations. New idea helps an individual to capture new markets and maintain existing market shares. It provides firms with competitive advantage to grow, this is not only through reduced prices, but by its ability to redesign, to repackage, to customize and improve quality of its offerings. Innovation has long been recognized as an important driver of business performance (Morris & Kuratko, 2018).

Empirical research and surveys of business activities show that innovation leads to new products and services, better quality, and lower prices. These organizations define business performance by the number of innovations that have been undertaken within a specific period and the value and number of patent right procured (Othman, 2015). Innovativeness' not only improves operations in an organization but also creates a clear, positive effect on the growth of business income, employment, and firm's processes and in general leads to a cost cutting system in the organization. Innovativeness is an organization's tendency to engage in and support new ideas, novelty, experimentation, and creative processes that may result in new products. In its original sense, innovativeness can be defined as the degree to which an individual or other entity is relatively earlier in adopting new ideas than the other members of a system (Adegbite & Abereijo, 2014). Innovation is a requisite skill that is embedded in Business Education programme.

Business Education is the type of training with the aim of making people ready for entrance into business career and having centered on career, become capable of rendering services therein. This will enable them to advance from their present levels of employment to higher levels (Atakpa & Okoro, 2009). From the array of the definitions, business education could be viewed as that aspect of education that prepares the students to be competent in their attitude to work, skills acquisition and ability to perform effectively and efficiently as entrepreneurs, employers of labor rather than being employees. Business education could also be viewed as an education programme concerned with the training and preparation of students for gainful employment in the labor market. Business Education is a discipline that emphasize on work skills acquisition by recipients. This enables Business

Education to prepare the beneficiaries to be able to face the challenges of employee skills expectations and entrepreneurial skills requirement for self-establishment in Business Education (Okon in Andah & Atah, 2022). Colleges of Education offer a 3-year course in business education, while Universities and Polytechnics in Nigeria offer a four year course in business education. At the tertiary education level, Business Education is concerned with the training of students to acquire practical skills in different fields of human endeavor. Essentially therefore, Business Education at tertiary education level forms the bedrock for the provision of manpower, development and human resources.

Business Education is an aspect of vocational and general education which provides its learners with competent skills to perform several tasks in classroom and the world of business, and the education comes in different specialties (Ogwunte, 2023). It is a purposeful education which can be used as a solution for employment reduction among graduates and for nations wellbeing (Wagbara, 2017). Ubulom (2014) stated that Business Education is a broad and comprehensive discipline. Whose instructional programme encompasses the knowledge, attitudes, skills and competencies needed by all citizens in order to effectively manage their personal businesses and economic system as well as vocational knowledge and skills needed for entry-level employment and advancement in a broad range of business careers.

Federal Republic of Nigerian (FRN, 2013) emphasized Business Education as a major component of vocational and technical education which offers prevocational subject for the preparation of an individual into advance or specific occupation like accounting, secretarial, marketing, office technology, management, data processing and distributive occupation. Business Education is an educational process that provides individuals with the business and pedagogical competences necessary for teaching and practicing of business concepts, knowledge and skills for entry into business world as employer or employee and participating as a business teacher (Ubulom & Enyoghasim, 2012). In addition, Ubulom (2012) defined Business Education as that training process which an individual receives with the primary inducement of acquiring adequate attitude, knowledge, concepts, understanding and skills in business activities for vocational or personal usage or career as a manager or teacher wherever he find himself in the business world. Gidado and Akaze (2014) viewed Business Education as “total educational programme that provides the recipient with skills, understanding, knowledge and attitude needed to be effective in the world of business as a consumer or producer of goods and services”. Business Education provides individual with the chance to: create aptitudes, capacities and understanding that will empower him to satisfactorily deal with his private concern undertakings; observe a comprehension of the professional open door accessible in his condition and expect his citizenship responsibilities through illuminated participation in economic development (Odunaike & Amoda, 2013).

To achieve this, the students must be equipped with the necessary entrepreneurship skills relevant to their job experience. Hence, tertiary institutions of learning in Rivers State need to equip their Business Education students with the fundamental entrepreneurship skills that will imbibe in them a favourable disposition to prudently manage their enterprises in the most profitable way and perform optimally in the world of work. Therefore, if these graduates are not equipped with the fundamental entrepreneurship skills needed in business enterprises, they become ineffective and inefficient. Thus, there is need to identify these skills that will enable efficiency in the business transactions and develop cordial relationship

with coworkers. On this note, the researchers therefore, deem it necessary to carry out an empirical study to determine the entrepreneurship skills acquired for employability by Business Education graduates in Rivers State Universities.

Statement of the Problem

In recent times, there have been unprecedented outcry and complaints from employers in both public and private sectors about the employability of Nigerian graduates. This is in agreement with Godspower and Ekpo (2021), who stated that graduates produced by the educational institutions in Nigeria, with little or no skills relevant to the needs of the work place is the reason for high rate of unemployment in Nigeria. Hence, Business education graduates are no different in this regard. However, Business Education is a field of study designed to develop appropriate skills and competencies in business practice. It involves teaching students the fundamentals, concepts, theories and process of business. Business Education is a course that prepares students for entry into advancement in jobs within business and it is equally important because it prepares students to handle their own business affairs. Business Education programme is structured in a way to provide the necessary entrepreneurship skills set to be acquired for employability by its graduates in and outside the classroom.

This is evident in the participation of Business Education students in both industrial training and teaching practice programmes. While industrial training programme is meant to expose them to work as an entrepreneur in places outside the classroom, some of the places Business Education graduates are supposed to have employment opportunity outside the classroom include oil and gas industries, medium and large scale industries and self-employment. This is because one of the major options in Business Education programme is entrepreneurship Education. However, graduates find it difficult to gain employment outside the classroom, especially in small and medium/large scale industries. This could be attributable to lack of entrepreneurial skills required for employability to work in such firms. By implication, there is a gap between the skills acquired by these graduates and the skills required by small and medium/large scale industries. It is on this note that this study seeks to examined the entrepreneurship skills acquired for employability by Business Education graduates in Rivers State Universities.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to investigate entrepreneurship skills acquired for Employability by Business Education graduates in Rivers State Universities. Specifically, the study attempted to achieve the following:

1. Determine the extent to which innovative skills are acquired for employability by Business Education graduates in Rivers State Universities.
2. Determine the extent to which creative thinking skills are acquired for employability by Business Education graduates in River State. Universities.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. To what extent do Business Education graduates acquire innovative skills for employability in Rivers State Universities?
2. To what extent do Business Education graduates acquire creative thinking skills for employability in Rivers State Universities?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

1. There is no significance difference between the mean responses of Business Education graduates in Rivers State University and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education on the extent they acquire innovation skills for employability in Rivers State.
2. There is no significance difference between the mean responses of Business Education graduates in Rivers State University and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education on the extent they acquired critical thinking skills for employability in Rivers State Universities.

Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey design. The population of the study was 40 students which consisted of all Business Education Postgraduate Master students in 2021/2022 academic session in two institutions namely Rivers State University and Ignatius Ajuju University of Education. The entire population of 40 students were studied and no sampling was done as the population size was considered manageable by the researcher. The instrument used for data collection was a self-structure questionnaire with 20-items titled: "Entrepreneurship Skills Acquired for Employability by Business Education Graduates in Rivers State Universities" (ESAEBEGRSU). The instrument was structured on a four points rating scale of High Extent (HE) 4 points, Moderate Extent (ME) 3 points, Low Extent (LE) 2 points and Very Low Extent (VLE) 1 point. The instrument was validated by two Experts from Business Education and one Measurement and Evaluation Expert, all from the Faculty of Education in Rivers State University. The reliability of the instrument was established using Cronbach's Alpha method which yielded a score of 0.80. The instrument was administered to the respondents by the researcher. Data collected were analyzed using Mean and Standard Deviation for the research questions and t-test statistics was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

Analysis of Data and Result/Hypotheses Testing

Research Question 1

To what extent do Business Education graduates acquire innovative skills for employability in Rivers State Universities?

Table 1: Mean Responses of Business Education Graduates on the Extent to which Innovative Skills are Acquired for their Employability in Rivers State Universities (N = 40)

S/No.	Item – Statements Ability to:	IAUE n = 32			RSU n = 8		
		\bar{X}	SD	Remarks	\bar{X}	SD	Remarks
1.	Be open to new ideas and willingness to consider different perspectives/options.	3.84	0.76	High Extent	3.51	1.13	High Extent
2.	Learn and explore new things/ideas.	3.84	0.83	High Extent	3.87	0.39	High Extent
3.	Keep trying even when faced with challenges and set backs.	3.68	0.81	High Extent	3.68	1.38	High Extent
4.	Take risk in order to achieve set goals.	3.78	0.66	High Extent	3.62	0.74	High Extent
5.	Adapt and change when needed	3.78	0.66	High Extent	3.87	0.38	High Extent
Grand \bar{X}		3.78	0.74	High Extent	3.62	0.80	High Extent

Source: Survey Data (2023)

Data presented on Table 1 revealed that innovative skills are acquired by Business Education graduates for employability. This is evident in the mean responses of the respondents. The items indicated mean and standard deviation values respectively as follows: ability to be open to new ideas and willingness to consider different

perspectives/options. (3.84, 3.51 and 0.76, 1.13), ability to learn and explore new things/ideas (3.84, 3.87 and 0.83, 0.31), ability to keep trying even when faced with challenges and setbacks (3.68, 3.68 and 0.81, 1.38), ability to take risk in order to achieve set goals (3.78, 3.62 and 0.66 0.74), ability to adapt and change when needed (3.78, 3.87 and 0.66, 0.38). The grand mean and standard deviation of 3.78, 3.62 and 0.74, 0.80 respectively indicate that the respondents agreed to a high extent that innovative skills are acquired for their employability.

Research Question 2

To what extent do Business Education graduates acquire creative thinking skills for employability in Rivers State Universities

Table 2: Mean Responses of Business Education Graduates on the Extent to which Creative Thinking Skills are Acquired for their Employability in Rivers State Universities (N = 40)

S/No.	Item – Statements Ability to:	IAUE n = 32			RSU n = 8		
		\bar{X}	SD	Remarks	\bar{X}	SD	Remarks
6.	Be open to multiple perspectives and being able to adapt to change.	4.0	0.56	High Extent	3.51	1.13	High Extent
7.	Be playful and curious, and being willing to experiment with different ideas.	3.93	0.41	High Extent	3.51	1.38	High Extent
8.	Be able to make connections between seemingly unrelated ideas.	3.75	0.67	High Extent	3.62	0.71	High Extent
9.	Be able to imagine things in my mind and create mental images.	3.75	0.72	High Extent	3.56	1.13	High Extent
10.	Be able to try new things	3.71	0.98	High Extent	3.56	0.45	High Extent
	Grand \bar{X}	3.82	0.66	High Extent	3.55	0.96	High Extent

Source: Survey Data (2023)

Data presented on Table 2 revealed that creative thinking skills are acquired by Business Education graduates for their employability. This is evident in the mean responses of the respondent. The items indicated mean and standard deviation values respectively as follows: Ability to be open to multiple perspectives and being able to adapt to change (4.0, 3.51, and 0.56, 1.13), ability to be playful and curious, and being willing to experiment with different ideas. (3.93, 3.51, and 0.41, 1.38), ability to be able to make connections between seemingly unrelated ideas (3.75, 3.62 and 0.67, 0.71), ability to be able to imagine things in my mind and create mental images (3.75, 3.56 and 0.72, 1.13) and ability to be able to try new things (3.71, 3.56 and 0.98, 0.45), The grand mean and standard deviation of 3.82, 3.55 and 0.66, 0.96 respectively indicate that the respondents agreed to a high extent that creativity thinking skills are acquired for their employability.

Hypothesis 1

There is no significance difference between the mean rating of Business Education graduates in Rivers State University and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education on the extent they acquired Innovative Skills for employability in Rivers State Universities.

Table 3: Summary of t-test Analysis on the extent to which Business Education Graduates acquire Innovative Skills as an aspect of Entrepreneurship skills for Employability

Variables Category	N	\bar{X}	SD	Df	α	t-cal	t-crit	Decision
IAUE	32	3.78	0.74	38	0.05	0.64	1.96	Accepted
RSU	8	3.62	0.80					

Source: Survey Data (2023)

Data presented in Table 3 showed the t-calculated value of 0.64 at 38 degree of freedom and 0.05 level of significance. Since the calculated t-value of 0.64 is less than the t-critical (t-crit) of 1.96, the null hypothesis is accepted. This implies that there is no significant difference between the mean responses of Business Education graduates in Ignatius Ajuru University of Education and Rivers State University on the extent they acquired innovative skills for their employability.

Hypothesis 2

There is no significance difference between the mean rating of Business Education graduates in Rivers State University and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education on the extent they acquire creative thinking skills for employability in Rivers State Universities.

Table 4: Summary of t-test Analysis on the extent to which Business Education Graduates acquire Creative Thinking skills as an aspect of Entrepreneurship Skills for Employability

Variables Category	N	\bar{X}	SD	Df	A	t-cal	t-crit	Decision
IAUE	32	3.82	0.66	38	0.05	0.57	1.96	Accepted
RSU	8	3.55	0.96					

Source: Survey Data (2023)

Data presented in table 4 showed the t-calculated value of 0.57 at 38 degree of freedom and 0.05 level of significance. Since the calculated t-value of 0.57 is less than the t-critical (t-crit) of 1.96, the null hypothesis is accepted. This implies that there is no significant difference between the mean responses of Business Education graduates in Ignatius Ajuru Universities of Education and Rivers State University on the extent they acquired creative thinking skills for their employability.

Discussion of Findings

Result from research question one of the study revealed the extent to which Business Education graduates acquired innovative skills for employability. The result showed that Business Education graduates in Rivers State Universities agreed to a high extent that innovative skills are acquired for their employability. This corroborates with the study of Naboth (2022) who stressed that innovative skills involves taking calculative risk to achieve set goals in an organization.

Hypothesis one also states that there is no significant difference between the mean response of Business Education graduates in Rivers State Universities and Ignatius Ajuru University

of Education on the extent they acquire innovative skills for employability. This is line with the finding of Lambert (2020), who noted that innovative skills are crucial for employability.

Result from research question two of the study revealed the extent to which Business Education graduates acquire critical thinking skills for employability. The result showed that Business Education graduates in Rivers State Universities agreed to a high extent that creative thinking skills are acquired for their employability. The finding agreed with the assertion by Umoh (2019) who noted that creativity is a process by which a symbolic domain in the culture is changed.

The hypothesis two states that there is no significantly difference between the man responses of Business Education graduates in Rivers State University and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education on the extent to which they acquired creative thinking skills for employability.

Conclusion

This research study indicated that innovative skills and creative skills were the element students should have in order to enhance their ability for self-employment or gain employment opportunity in the labour market. It was concluded that Business Education graduates should acquire the necessary entrepreneurship skills for their employability. These skills are include: Innovative skills and creative thinking skills. These skills enable graduates to contribute effectively to the overall success in the world of work. Therefore, universities should provide the students with learning opportunity and experiences that would enable Business Education graduates acquire these requisite entrepreneurship skills.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were drawn:

1. Business Education students in entrepreneurship option in universities should be given awareness by their lecturers on the need to acquire entrepreneurship skills.
2. Business Educators should train students to be equipped with entrepreneurship skills that will enable them function optimally in their working environment.

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