LEVEL OF ACQUISITION OF ENTREPRENEURIAL INNOVATION SKILLS BY POSTGRADUATE BUSINESS EDUCATION STUDENTS FOR SELF-SUSTAINABILITY IN RIVERS STATE

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Abstract
The study ascertained the level of acquisition of entrepreneurial innovation skills by post-graduate business education students for self-sustainability in Rivers State. One research question aided the study and one hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance. The design of the study was descriptive survey. A total of 298 business education postgraduate students in two Rivers State universities made up the population. 44 postgraduate business education students in Rivers State University and 254 postgraduate business education students in Ignatius Ajuru University of Education in Rivers State. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire tittled: Entrepreneurial Innovation Skills Acquisition Questionnaire (EISAQ). Three experts validated the instrument and a reliability test using Cronbach Alpha method yielded an internal consistency index of 0.86. Mean ratings and standard deviation were used to answer the research question while t-test for large group mean was used to test the hypothesis at a significance at 0.05. The findings of the study revealed that business education postgraduate students acquired moderate level of entrepreneurial innovation, skills for self-sustainability. The findings of the study also revealed that postgraduate business education students in Rivers State University and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education did not differ significantly regarding the level of acquisition of entrepreneurial innovation skills for self-sustainability. Based on the findings, conclusion was drawn that entrepreneurial innovation skills acquired by postgraduate business education students for self-sustainability was necessary. Lack or absence of these skills negatively affected graduates embarking on any business ventures was led to business failures. It was recommended among others that graduate students of business education must be able to maintain entrepreneurial characteristics and traits by finding solution to problems that arise when operating business ventures. The courage to continue the business will lead to success and self-sustainability. Entrepreneurship centres in universities or other tertiary institutions in Nigeria must be equipped and utilized to assist institutions to bridge the gap created by the theoretical nature of entrepreneurial programmes in institutions.

Keywords: Skills, Entrepreneurial innovation skills, Business education, Acquisition, Self-sustainability

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Introduction

An entrepreneur should be able to effectively manage people, budgets, operations and in some instances, investors. This requires someone with a multi-tasking innovative work style, who can plan for both short-term and long term goals of business. Iheanacho (2011) asserted that potential entrepreneurs can be trained to sharpen their innovative skills to:

1. identify a need that can be satisfied with a product or service;
2. analyze trends in the economy which will enable the potential entrepreneur to project the prospects of the business and anticipated threats;
3. develop a viable business plan focusing on the details of activities required to market the product, source for resources and programme of action needed for the implementation of projects;
4. assembling of resources;
5. recognize that adversity and crisis facts of business life and developing the capacity to deal with events as they occur;
6. develop effective management skills especially planning, coordinating and controlling.

Similarly, Momoh (2012) identified the following categories of innovative skills that make successful entrepreneurs: personal skills, interpersonal skills, critical and creative thinking skills, practical skills, vision to drive, persistence, initiative, risk tolerance, resilience (ability to recover from failure), self-determination, control and commitment, team work, leadership and motivation, communication skills and listening skills, conflict resolution, personal relations, negotiation and ethics. All these skills can be learned and developed. Entrepreneurs need a well-developed set of critical thinking skills encapsulated in: problem solving, opportunity identification and creative thinking. Okpara (2007) saw innovation as the process of changing ideas into reality that triggers creative ideas to generate series of innovative events. In line with this, Okolie and Ogbaekirigwe (2014) asserted that innovative skills involve the consolidation of fresh ideas or accumulation of knowledge. Thus, innovative skills are skills acquired by individuals that empower the individuals to introduce new things capable of ensuring self-employment and self-sustainability in the society. This class of skills allows individuals to take cognizance of untapped business opportunities in the environment and propel them into taking advantage of such opportunities.

According to Hassan (2013) innovative entrepreneurs usher in new products, inaugurate new processes of production and discern new markets for economic products. To Thom-Otuya and Thom-Otuya (2008) innovative entrepreneurs usher in new ideas, new products, new technologies and methods and are interested in re-organizing enterprises for profit maximization. Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2005) asserted that innovative entrepreneur have initiative for production innovation, process innovation and organizational innovation. OECD further gave detailed explanation of their assertions expressing that, innovative entrepreneurs with product innovation introduce products that are new or significantly improved with respect to intended uses. This includes improvements in material and technical specifications, incorporation of software that is user friendly and other functions that involve activities, such as research and development, acquisition of patents and technology licenses, trademarks and industrial engineering.

Process innovative entrepreneurs implement fresh or expressively improved production or delivery process that includes significant changes in equipment usage, techniques and software.

Marketing innovation entrepreneurs implement fresh marketing processes that involve significant change in product design and packaging, product promotion and pricing with the aim of introducing new products or increasing sales. Organization innovation entrepreneurs implement new organizational policies with intention of boosting firm's performance by reducing administrative costs, gaining access to non-tradable assets, improving work satisfaction and reducing costs of supplies.

It can be concluded here that an individual with innovative skills acquired through business education will contribute positively to the nation's economic development and self-sustainability. This will contribute positively to hunger and poverty reduction thereby vaunting the economic and social status of the nation.

In order to be able to understand the concept of business education, it would be necessary to look at the definition of business education. Evans (2011) viewed business education as an essential part of the preparation of youth for life and living. Godfrey (2013) postulated that business education is a programme of instruction which consists of two parts: office education - a vocational programme for office careers through initial, refresher and upgrading education and the other as general business education, a programme to provide students with information and competencies, which are needed by all in managing personal business affairs and in using the services of the businesses Cross (2010) posited that the concept of business education in the American context is a field of study and training in business practices and in specific skills such as accounting, information processing, keyboarding/typewriting techniques and record keeping. It also covers business management, business communication and distributive trade practices.

To Agbola (2015), business education is a form of education that is concerned with the acquisition of skills. Ubulom (2012) described business education as a collaborative programme in which educational and industrial sectors of any economy form partnership thereby preparing individuals to adequately fit into both industry and the classroom as professionals. Consequently, business education can simply be defined as that aspect of educational programme designed to provide an individual understanding knowledge, values, attitudes and skills needed in the business world, thereby producing responsible, productive and self-reliant citizens. For the purpose of this study, business education is defined as a programme designed to produce manpower that possess the required knowledge, skills and attitude for harnessing other resources, bringing them into goods and services demanded by the society for the satisfaction of wants

Skill acquisition is defined as the ability to be trained on a particular task or function. (Mike, 2014). Mike emphasized that the importance of skill acquisition includes self-employment, diverse job opportunities, employment generation, effective function and crime reduction. Idoko (2014) defined skill acquisition as the form of training by individuals or group of individuals that can lead to acquisition of knowledge for self-sustenance. It involves the training of people in different fields of trade under a legal agreement between the trainers and the trainees for certain duration and under certain conditions. Ochiagha (2011) defined skill acquisition as the process of demonstrating the habit of active thinking or behaviour in a specific activity. Ochiagha further stated that skill acquisition is seen as the ability to do or perform an activity that is related to some meaningful exercise, work or job. Ochiagha maintained that for skills to be acquired, appropriate knowledge, attitudes, habit of thought and qualities of character are learnt to enable

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the acquirer develop intellectual, emotional and moral character which prepares the individual for a brighter future.

Self-sustainability is defined as the social and economic ability of an individual, household or a community to meet essential needs (including protection, food, water, shelter, safety, health, business and education) in a sustainable manner and with dignity (Anukan, 2013). Ogbonna (2017) pointed out that self-sustainability refers to dependence on one's abilities, judgment and resources to do whatever should be done. It is a state in which a person or an entrepreneur needs little or no help from or interaction with others.

An individual is said to be self-sustained when the individual can depend less on other people and family in the management of human and material resources. Citizens of a nation will be self-sustained when they have possible cause to access and utilize the essentials of life which includes good food, clothing, shelters, medications, transportations and functional education (Ofoye, 2015). For one to be sustainable, one must be enterprising. One is enterprising when there is attributes of verbal skills for selling, dominating, leading, seeing oneself as a strong, masculine leader (Ugwuda, 2014). There are evidences from developed societies that shows a positive relationship between entrepreneurial skill acquisition and self-sustainability (Agbeze, 2012).

Statement of the Problem

Most business education graduates in Rivers State constantly face the problem of unemployment and failure of businesses before their fifth year in operation as a seeming of lack of entrepreneurial innovation skill acquisition. It seems most disappointing and frustrating when an entrepreneur who has been long unemployed before starting his own business is forced out of business because of lack of entrepreneurial innovation skills. The failure of these entrepreneurs is not because they do not have the necessary capital and machines to stay afloat, but they seem to lack requisite entrepreneurial skills needed to grow from a small business positions to bigger ones and as well to remain in business. On the strength of this, this study analysed the level of acquisition of entrepreneurial innovation skills by post graduate business students for self-sustainability in Rivers State.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to ascertain the level of entrepreneurial innovation skills acquired by postgraduate business education students for self-sustainability in Rivers State.

Research Question

One research question guided the study.

What is the level of acquisition of entrepreneurial innovation skills by postgraduate business education students for self-sustainability in Rivers State?

Hypothesis

One null hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance.

There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of postgraduate business education students of Rivers State University and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education on the level of acquisition of entrepreneurial innovation skill for self-sustainability.

Method

The study was carried out in Rivers State University and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Port Harcourt, Rivers State. The design of the study was descriptive survey. One research question guided the study and one hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance. The population of the study was 298, which made up 44 postgraduate business education students in Rivers State University and 254 postgraduate business education students in Ignatius Ajuru University of Education in Rivers State. The instrument for the study was a structured questionnaire titled: Entrepreneurial Innovation Skills Acquisition Questionnaire (EISAQ). Three experts validated the instrument and a reliability test using Cronbach Alpha method yielded an index of 0.86. Data collected were analysed using mean ratings and standard deviation for the research question and t-test for large group mean was used to test the hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance. The decision rule was: if the calculated p-value was greater than 0.05, the hypothesis was rejected and if the calculated p-value was less than the critical value, the hypothesis was accepted

Results

Research Question: What is the level of acquisition of entrepreneurial Innovation skills by postgraduate business education students for self-sustainability in Rivers State?

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation on the Level of Acquisition of Entrepreneurial Innovation Skills by Postgraduate Business Education Students for Self-Sustainability in Rivers State

s/n	Item	RSU (N=44)			IAUE (N=236)		
		$\overline{X}$	SD	RMKS	$\overline{X}$	SD	RMKS
1	Identify and exploit new technological trends to ensure self-sustainability	3.41	1.23	ML	3.80	1.32	ML
2	Introduce new goods or services that meet people's needs and promotes self-sustainability	3.41	1.25	ML	3.19	1.29	ML
3	Identify available business opportunities that guarantees self –sustainability	3.39	1.23	ML	3.73	1.10	ML
4	Improve production and delivery methods to guarantee self-sustainability	3.29	1.22	ML	4.43	1.15	HL
5	Implement new marketing strategies for self-sustainability	3.34	1.33	ML	3.95	1.14	ML
6	To recover from failure	3.52	1.09	ML	2.90	1.39	ML
7	To develop capacity to deal with adversity and crises when they occur	3.54	1.17	ML	3.61	1.89	ML
8	Identify a need that can be satisfied with a product or service	3.39	1.26	ML	3.29	1.32	ML

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9	Develop a viable business plan that focused on details required to market a product	3.39	1.26	ML	3.67	1.11	ML
	Grand Mean & SD	**3.41**	**1.23**	**ML**	**3.61**	**1.30**	**ML**

***ML**= Moderate Level, **HL**= High Level*
***Source:** Field Survey (2021)*

Data in Table 1 indicated that all the ten items had mean ratings ranging between 2.90 to 4.43 which means that business education postgraduate students in both above named universities in Rivers State have High Level (HL) and Moderate Level (ML) of acquisition of entrepreneurial innovation skills for self-sustainability.

Hypothesis:

There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of postgraduate business education students of Rivers State University and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education on the level of acquisition of entrepreneurial innovation skill for self-sustainability.

Table 2: t-test Analysis of the Mean Responses of postgraduate Business Education Students in RSU and IAUE on the level of acquisition of entrepreneurial innovation skill for self-sustainability.

Respondents	**N**	**$\bar{X}$**	**SD**	**DF**	**Alpha**	**t-cal**	**t-crit**	**Decision**
IAUE	236	3.61	1.30	278	0.05	1.00	1.96	Accepted
RSU	44	3.41	1.23					

t-cal (t-calculated), t-crit (t-critical).

The result of the hypothesis testing as shown in Table 2 indicate that when the mean ratings of postgraduate business education students in RSU (mean = 3.41, SD = 1.23) and IAUE (mean = 3.61, SD = 1.30) on the level of acquisition of entrepreneurial innovation skill for self-sustainabilityis tested for difference using t-test, a t-calculated value of 1.00 is obtained which is less than the t-critical value of 1.96 at 0.05 level of statistical significance. This result therefore indicates that there is no significant difference in the mean rating of postgraduate business education students in RSU and IAUE and the null hypothesis is therefore accepted and retained.

Discussion

The findings of the study indicated that entrepreneurial innovation skills for self-sustainability included identification of a need that can be satisfied with a product or service, analyzing trends in the economy which will enable potential entrepreneurs to project the prospects of the business and anticipated threats, development of a viable business plan focusing on the details of activities required to market the product, sourcing for resources and programmes of action needed for the implementation of the projects, assembling of resources and capacity to deal with adversities and crisis as they occur. This findings agrees with the assertions of Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)(2005) which asserted that innovative entrepreneurs have initiative for production innovation, process innovation and organizational innovation. OECD further gave detailed explanation of their

assertions saying that: innovative entrepreneurs with product innovation introduce products that are new or significantly improved with respect to intended uses. This includes improvements in material and technical specifications, incorporation of software that is user friendly and other functions that involve activities, such as research and development, acquisition of patents and technology licenses, trademarks and industrial engineering. In agreement with the above, Thom-Otuya and Thom-Otuya (2008) remarked that innovative entrepreneurs usher in new ideas, new products, new technologies and methods and are interested in re-organizing enterprises for profit maximization. Hassan (2013) buttressed that innovative entrepreneurs usher in new products, inaugurate new processes of production and discern new markets for economic products. Okolie and Ogbaekirigwe (2014) asserted that innovative skills involve the consolidation of fresh ideas or accumulation of knowledge lasting comprehensive set for the discovery of possible opportunities. Thus, innovative skills are skills acquired by individuals that empower individuals to introduce new things capable of ensuring self-employment in the society. This class of skills allows individuals to take cognizance of untapped business opportunities in the environment and propel them into taking advantage of such opportunities.

Test of the hypothesis indicated that there was no significant difference in the mean ratings of postgraduate business education students of Rivers State University and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education on the level of acquisition of entrepreneurial innovative skills for self-sustainability. Based on the respondents view, the researcher is of the opinion that entrepreneurial innovative skills improve self-sustainability of postgraduate business education students.

Conclusion

The conclusion reached from this study actually established that entrepreneurial innovation skills are necessary for postgraduate business education students for self-sustainability. These skills are veritable tools that prepare business education graduates for the world of work and to become self-sustainable as operators of business ventures. Lack or absence of these skills negatively affects graduates embarking on business ventures.

Recommendations

Sequel to the findings of this study, it was recommended that:

1 The graduate students of business education must be able to maintain entrepreneurial characteristics and traits by finding solutions to problems that arise when operating business ventures. The courage to continue the business will lead to success and self-sustainability.

2 Entrepreneurship centres in universities or other tertiary institutions in Nigeria must be equipped and utilized to assist these institutions to bridge the gap created by the theoretical nature of entrepreneurial programmes in institutions.

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