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SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES MANAGERS' RATING OF SKILLS NEEDED BY BUSINESS EDUCATION GRADUATES FOR ENTREPRENEURIAL SUCCESS IN ONDO AND EKITI STATES

Dr. J. I. Ezenwafor, FABEN, MNIM
Associate Professor of Business Education,
Department of Vocational Education,
Faculty of Education,
Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka.
ji.ezenwafor@unizik.edu.ng.
Justed1998@yahoo.com

Olaniyi. O.N. (Ph.D)
Department of Vocational & Technical Education Faculty of Education,
Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti,
Ekiti State.
Oladele4millenium1@yahoo.com
oladele.olaniyi@esku.edu.ng

Abstract

This study was necessitated by the need to ascertain whether business education graduates acquire adequate skills for entrepreneurial success by determining small and medium enterprises managers' ratings of such skills needed by business education graduates for entrepreneurial success in Ondo and Ekiti States. Two research questions guided the study and two hypotheses were tested. The design of the study was descriptive survey. The population for the study was 540 managers out of which 230 were sampled. A structured questionnaire having five point rating scale which was duly validated by experts in the field was used to collect data. Test re-test method was used to determine the reliability of the instrument and application of Cronbach Alpha for the internal consistency yielded an overall reliability coefficient of 0.75. Mean and standard deviation were used to analyze data in respect of research questions and to determine the cohesiveness or otherwise of respondents' ratings. The z-test was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. Findings revealed that small and medium enterprises managers rated problem-solving and marketing skills as the skills highly needed by business education graduates for entrepreneurial success in the area. Based on these findings, it was recommended among others that government and professional body such as Association of Business Educators of Nigeria (ABEN) should float training programmes such as workshops, seminars and conferences on the skills needed for entrepreneurial success to build and enhance the capacity of business teachers, business education students, business education graduates, entrepreneurs and general public at regular intervals.

Introduction

It is obvious that society is changing rapidly based on knowledge driven by modern technologies. The current global economy is a knowledge economy driven by creativity, innovation and knowledge. This global economic growth has created a sense of urgency leading to calls for reforming our approach to education and training as critical component of national economic development. It should be noted that the educational practices received

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from the colonial masters were tailored towards preparation for white collar jobs on graduation. However, in this contemporary time, Olaniyi (2016) noted that the skills needed by teeming graduates are more than mere preparation for white collar job but for self-reliant and self-sustaining to provide required impetus for the nation's development. Hence, the requirements of graduates to fit in as managers or entrepreneurs are more prominent so as to face the challenges of modern day.

Given the current economic challenges facing many countries across the globe, the idea of engendering greater entrepreneurial activity has become a prominent goal for many governments. It becomes imperative for the nation to have a re-think on educational delivery system in order to produce graduates who can be self-reliant and self-sustaining. Olaniyi (2016) recounted that Nigerian governments, both past and present, have evolved several programmes aimed at creating jobs and reducing unemployment at various levels and at various times. Notable among them are the Operation Feed the Nation (1976), Operation Back to Land (1983), the National Directorate of Employment (1986), Family Economic Advancement Programme (1997), National Poverty Eradication Programme NAPEP (2001) among others.

Despite all these measures, this author is of the view that unemployment is still prevalent in our society partly because the curricula of our tertiary institutions have not fully captured the dynamics of the labour market, thus rendering their products unsuitable for the needs of the labour market. It is sad to note that the trend of unemployment is aggravated as more and more graduates (including graduates of business education programme) continue to join the queue of educated unemployed. As part of the government commitment in equipping the youths with skills that will help them to be self-reliant, entrepreneurship education was introduced as compulsory course in our tertiary institutions.

Entrepreneurship education is a programme or part of the programme that prepares individuals to undertake the formation of; and acquisition of small-business. Ashmore (2007) noted that entrepreneurship education seeks to prepare people especially youths to be responsible, enterprising individuals who become entrepreneurs or entrepreneurial thinkers and who contribute to economic and sustainable community development.

According to Paul (2005), the objectives of entrepreneurship education include to: (1) offer functional education to youth to make them self-employed and self-reliant (2) reduce high rate of poverty and rural-urban migration (3) create employment and serve as a catalyst for economic growth and development. (4) provide youths/graduates with adequate training needed for creative and innovative in identifying novel business opportunities and establish a career in small and medium scale businesses.

Small and medium enterprises are usually owned and managed by individuals called business owners, entrepreneurs or business operators. The nature of the business is such that managers are employed to handle the affairs of the business by helping to source for business opportunities and plan promotional activities to increase patronage. Akarahu (2015) noted that the position small and medium enterprises occupy in the economic development of states

and Nigeria as a whole makes it such that the business can be located both in urban and rural areas. Small and medium enterprises consists of the most widely spread enterprises in Nigeria, involving men and women, some of which are graduates while others are not.

An individual thinking of starting a business needs a broad array of skills for the business to succeed in the competitive market. Skill is the habit of doing something well; especially skill gained through training or experience. Okoli (2013) defined skills as the economic tools with which entrepreneurs confront and solve societal problems. Skills are practical activities which make one employable, self- % reliant and relevant to the society. Okoli further stated that entrepreneurs must possess these business skills that are necessary to enable them start, finance and market their own business enterprises. Skills are those activities that will enable an entrepreneur to manage his own enterprise. There are a number of skills needed by graduates of business education to be able to run any kind of business enterprise. They are problem-solving and marketing skills among others.

Entrepreneurs who are great problem solvers within any type of business are best prepared to answer all their customers' needs effectively. A business is built on the problem (that is, needs and wants) of customers without these customer problems; there will be no business at all. Notably, Ajaero (2006) stated that effective problem-solving skills for entrepreneurial development involve: critical thinking, understanding of the business, team spirit, decisiveness and courage. The knowledge of these skills will enable graduates of business education to identify business problems, become critical thinkers with the activity to turn such identified problems into business opportunities.

Similarly, Marketing skills are also important business skills an entrepreneur must have when planning to start a new business. Awojobi (2013) opined that the acquisition of marketing skills offers the entrepreneur the unique strategy for succeeding in business. The entrepreneur is able to offer the right product price which will be acceptable to customers, based on their perception of the value and cost that allows for a profit making. Business education graduates need the marketing skills in order to enable them identify their potential customers and persuade them to buy their products or services within and outside the states.

In the light of the above, with the educational reforms embarked by Federal government and the recently introduction of entrepreneurship education as a compulsory course in our tertiary institutions; the expectation was that business education graduates of Nigerian tertiary institutions would have acquired entrepreneurial skills that will enable them become successful entrepreneurs. Conversely, the graduates seem to make little or no attempt to establish small scale businesses of their own despite the abundant business opportunities in the country. If this ugly situation is allowed to continue, the aim and efforts of the government in reforming the education system will be defeated. It is therefore necessary to ascertain the problem-solving skills and marketing skills that perhaps could be needed by graduates of business education to run their own businesses and become employers of labour.

Purpose of the Study

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The main purpose of this study was to determine managers' rating of problem-solving and marketing skills needed by business education graduates for entrepreneurial success in Ondo and Ekiti States. Specifically, the study determined the extent:

1. problem solving skills are needed by business education graduates for entrepreneurial success in Ondo and Ekiti States.
2. marketing skills needed are by business education graduates for entrepreneurial success in Ondo and Ekiti States.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study.

1. To what extent do business education graduates need the problem-solving skills for entrepreneurial success in Ondo and Ekiti States?
2. To what extent do business education graduates need the marketing skills for entrepreneurial success in Ondo and Ekiti States?

Hypotheses

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

1. There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of small and medium enterprises managers in Ondo and Ekiti States on the extent problem-solving skills needed by business education graduates for entrepreneurial success.
2. There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female " SMEs managers on the extent marketing skills needed by business education graduates for entrepreneurial success in Ondo and Ekiti States.

METHOD

The design adopted in this study was descriptive survey. The study was carried out in Ondo and Ekiti States. The choice of the two states was informed by the fact that they have vast potential for entrepreneurial development as well as several tertiary institutions offering business education programmes. Population comprised 540 managers of small and medium enterprises (made up of 284 managers from Ondo State and 260 from Ekiti State) registered with the chamber of commerce in the two States. These managers were chosen because by experience, they understand the entrepreneurial atmosphere in the area and, therefore, were in a better position to know the skills that will help fresh graduates to succeed. Sample size of 230 was drawn from the population using: Taro Yamane's formula and Bowley's formula for the distribution of the 230 respondents between the two States.

Questionnaire was the instrument used for data collection. The instrument was validated by five experts both in business education and test and measurement. Test-retest method was used to determine the reliability of the instrument. Data collected were analyzed with Cronbach Alpha and reliability coefficient of 0.75 was obtained. Out of the total 230 copies of the instrument administered on the respondents, 228 copies were retrieved (110

from Ekiti and 118 from Ondo). Coincidentally, the total numbers of male and female respondents were 118 and 110 respectively. Data collected relative to the research questions were analyzed using mean and standard deviation, while null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance using z-test.

Results

Research Question 1

To what extent do business education graduates need problem-solving skills for entrepreneurial success in Ondo and Ekiti States?

Table 1:

Respondents mean ratings on problem-solving skills needed by business education graduates for entrepreneurial success in Ondo and Ekiti States (N=228)

S/N	Problem-solving Skills Needed by Business Education graduates	$\bar{X}$	SD	Remarks
1.	Ability to recognize and identify problems.	4.52	0.77	Very HighExtent
2.	Ability to identify reasons for the discrepancies in products.	4.22	0.87	High Extent
3.	Ability to develop critical thinking to turn problem into opportunities.	4.34	0.82	High Extent
4.	Thorough understanding of the line of business involved.	4.35	0.85	High Extent
5.	Ability to team up with experts in solving problems.	4.30	0.87	High Extent
6.	Ability to believe that a solution exists for every problem.	4.29	0.96	High Extent
7.	Ability to implement a plan of action to resolve problem.	4.25	0.88	High Extent
8.	Careful analysis of data collected to enhance the business.	4.21	0.93	High Extent
9.	Courage to take extreme measures on identified problem.	4.22	0.97	High Extent
10.	Ability to evaluate and monitor progress	4.22	0.92	High Extent
	Mean of Means	**4.29**		**High Extent**

Data in Table 1 reveal that the respondents rated item 1 very high extent with the mean rating of 4.52. While all other nine items with mean ratings ranged from 4.21-4.25 are rated highly extent for entrepreneurial success of business education graduates. The mean of means of 4.29 indicates that the respondents rated problem-solving skills highly needed by business education graduates to succeed in their entrepreneurial development.

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Research Question 2

To what extents do business education graduates need marketing skills for entrepreneurial success in Ondo and Ekiti States?

Table 2:
Respondent mean ratings on marketing skills needed by business education graduates for entrepreneurial success in Ondo and Ekiti States (N=228)

S/N	Marketing Skills Needed by Business Education graduates	$\bar{X}$	SD	Remarks
1.	Ability to utilize the marketing mix.	4.31	0.91	High Extent
2.	Ability to identify customers' needs and satisfy those needs.	4.55	0.77	Very HighExtent
3.	Knowledge of market and technology.	4.45	0.88	High Extent
4.	Ability to handle customer complain satisfactorily	4.44	0.84	High Extent
5.	Ability to negotiate sales.	4.28	0.89	High Extent
6.	Ability to draw up good marketing plan	4.31	0.87	High Extent
7.	Ability to solve marketing problems.	4.40	0.91	High Extent
8.	Ability to carry out market research and information gathering.	4.31	0.95	High Extent
9.	Ability to display product properly.	4.30	0.89	High Extent
10.	Ability to understand intricacies business environment	4.25	0.94	High Extent
	Mean of Means	**4.36**	**0.89**	**High Extent**

The data in Table 2 reveal that the respondents rated item 2 very high extent with mean rating of 4.55. While all other nine items (items 51, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59 and 60) are rated highly extent with mean ratings of 4.31, 4.45, 4.28, 4.31, 4.40, 84.31, 4.30 and 4.25 respectively. The mean of means of 4.36 indicates that the respondents rated marketing skills highly needed by business education graduates for entrepreneurial success. The standard deviation from the table ranged from 0.77 to 0.94. This implies that respondents were cohesive in their ratings of marketing skills items.

Hypothesis 1

There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of respondents in Ondo and those in Ekiti States on the extent problem-solving skills are needed by business education graduates for entrepreneurial success.

Table 3:
Summary of z-test Analysis of the Mean Ratings of Respondents in Ondo and Ekiti States on problem-solving Skills Needed by Business Education

State	N	Mean	SD	α	Df	z-cal	z-crit	Remark
OndoState	118	4.20	0.62					
				0.05	226	2.70	1.96	Rejected
Ekiti State	110	4.40	0.48					

Data in Table 3 reveal that the calculated z-value of 2.70 at degree of freedom 226 and at 0.05 level of significance is greater than the critical value of 1.96. This implies that there is significant difference in the mean ratings of respondents in Ondo and Ekiti States on problem-solving skills needed by business education graduates for entrepreneurial success. Therefore, there is enough evidence to reject the null hypothesis.

Hypothesis 2

There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female respondents on the extent of marketing skills needed by business education graduates for entrepreneurial success in Ondo and Ekiti States.

Table 4: Summary of z-test Analysis of the Mean Ratings of male and female Respondents on marketing Skills Needed by Business Education Graduates for Entrepreneurial Success.

Gender	N	Mean	SD	α	Df	z-cal	z-crit	Remark
Male	118	4.31	0.75					
				0.05	226	1.36	1.96	Not Rejected
Female	110	4.42	0.52					

Data in Table 4 show that the calculated z-value of 1.36 at 226 degree of freedom and at 0.05 level of significance is less than critical value of 1.96. This shows that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female respondents on marketing skills needed by business education graduates in Ondo and Ekiti States for entrepreneurial success in Ondo and Ekiti States. Therefore, the hypothesis was not rejected.

Discussion

The findings of research question one showed that small and medium enterprises managers rated problem-solving skills highly needed by business education graduates for entrepreneurial success. This finding agrees with the view of Okoro and Asogwa (2011) who adjudged problem-solving skills as significant considering the fact that most plans and

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researches in organization are aimed at problem solving. This also is in line with the finding of Ayonmike (2011) who averred ability to solve problem as one of the keys skills entrepreneurs need to succeed in 10business. In essence, business education graduates should be able to recognize that a business is built on the problems, needs and wants of customers, without which, there will be no business at all. The test of the null hypothesis one revealed that small and medium enterprises managers in Ondo and Ekiti States differed in their mean ratings on problem-solving skills needed by business education graduates for entrepreneurial success.

The analysis of data on research question two showed that the respondents rated marketing skills highly needed by business education graduates for entrepreneurial success. This is in agreement with Okoro and Asogwa (2011) who posited that the twenty first century marketing skills have become necessary adjunct to business successes. Kotler and Keller (2009) corroborated that several things including goods, services, ideas, persons, properties, etc, can be marketed. The finding is also in collaboration with the perception of Okorie (2001) who opined that training needs for entrepreneurship must include marketing skills, thinking habit, doing habit and habit which enable individuals to conform to their environment and that this must be specific in terms of the business and its demand. The test of hypothesis two revealed that the respondents did not differ in their mean ratings on the marketing skills needed by business education graduates for entrepreneurial success. This is supported with the finding of Effiong (2011) that male and female respondents did not differ in their perception on the sales and marketing competencies required for success of students in managing small-scale enterprises.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that prospective entrepreneurs and business education graduates need to be equipped with problem-solving and marketing entrepreneurial skills before setting up any enterprise for self reliant and self-sustenance.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Government and professional bodies such as Association of Business Educators of Nigeria (ABEN) should float training programmes in terms of workshops, seminars and conferences to build and enhance the capacity of business teachers, business education students, business education graduates, entrepreneurs and general public at regular interval.
2. The skills identified in this study needed for successful entrepreneurial under - problem-solving and marketing skills should be included in the curriculum content of business education programme and be taught to all business education students irrespective of their preferred option.

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