



ASSESSMENT OF ENTREPRENEURIAL SKILLS NEEDED FOR SELF-EMPLOYMENT BY BUSINESS EDUCATION GRADUATES IN DELTA STATE, NIGERIA

Eze, T. I.¹ⁱ, Ezenwafor, J. I.², Igberaharha, C. O.³

^{1,2}Department of Vocational Education,

Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Nigeria

³Department of Technical and Business Education,

Delta State University, Abraka, Nigeria

Abstract:

This study on assessment of entrepreneurial skills needed for self-employment by business education graduates in Delta State was necessitated by need to equip business education graduates with skills for entrepreneurship. Three research questions guided the study and three null hypotheses were tested. Descriptive survey research design was adopted. The entire population of 377 was studied without sampling as the size was manageable. A 5-point rating scale questionnaire containing 30 items in three clusters which was validated by experts with grand reliability coefficient of 80 was used for data collection. Mean and standard deviation were used to analyse data to answer the research questions and determine the homogeneity or otherwise of the respondents views while the z-test was used to test the null hypotheses a 0.05 level of significance. Findings indicate that business education graduates in Delta State highly need accounting and office technology and management skills but moderately need marketing skills for self-employment. Also gender did not significantly affect the respondents mean ratings on the extent business education graduates need accounting and office technology and management skills for self-employment but did on the extent they need marketing skills. Based on the findings, it was concluded that business education graduates in Delta State need entrepreneurial skills such as accounting, office technology and management, and marketing skills for self-employment. It was recommended among others that business educators should use innovative

ⁱ Correspondence: email tylodubaeze@yahoo.com

instructional strategies to adequately equip their students with skills for entrepreneurial success.

Keywords: entrepreneurial skills, self-employment, business education graduates, employability

Introduction

The concept of employability has in recent times remained the focus of government, employers, job seekers and educators. Brown and Hesketh (2004) explained that employability is the relative chances of getting and maintaining different kinds of employment. For individuals, employability depends on the Knowledge, Skills and Abilities (KSA) they possess, the way they present those assets to employers and the context (e.g. personal circumstances and labour market environment) within which they seek employment. A major concern of graduates is what constitutes employability skills.

According to Kazilan, Hamzah and Bakar (2009), employability skills which are synonymous with entrepreneurial skills refer to a group of important skills instilled in each individual to become a productive workforce. According to Hillage and Pollard as cited in Imeokparia and Ediagbonya (2012), employability refers to a person's capability for gaining and maintaining employment. Employability skills or entrepreneurial skills are the skills needed by an individual to function effectively and efficiently in the world of work either as an employee or an employer of labour. Specifically, entrepreneurial skills are very important for success in self-employment.

Presently, skills possessed by graduates seem to be different from what they need to function effectively in employment. This is why the Secretary Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS, 1991 2001), developed ways of assisting educational institutions and schools to produce younger generations who will be willing to work and outlined both fundamental skills and workplace competencies to include basic thinking, personal qualities, resources, interpersonal information, and systems technology skills.

A detailed study carried out by United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (2012) using data from the Indonesian Ministry of Manpower and Transmigration showed that from 2007-2009 the number of people seeking jobs exceeded the number of job vacancies for higher education institution graduates with a high percentage of graduates looking for jobs (e.g., 26.7 percent in 2009). Malaysia also faced high graduate unemployment rates. A survey conducted by the Malaysian government in 2008 reported that graduates of technical studies and ICT

were more likely to be employed with 39.3 percent being unemployed at the time of the survey.

Nigeria and Delta State are not left out of the problem of graduate unemployment. This is because skills possessed by graduates seem to be different from what they need for employment. Nwokocha (2004) noted that the aim/goal of business education is the production of manpower that possesses the requisite knowledge, skill and attitude for harnessing other resources and bringing them together into a cooperative relationship to yield goods and services demanded by the society for the satisfaction of their wants and needs. Thus, business education graduates should acquire the skills needed to integrate management, marketing, accounting, finance and education concepts to function in employment as business teachers, office workers or entrepreneurs. It is with this background that it is imperative to conduct this study to determine the extent to which entrepreneurial skills are needed for self-employment by business education graduates in Delta State.

Statement of the Problem

In recent times, there have been unprecedented outcry and complaints from organizations as to the suitability of graduates in job placement. Imeokpana and Ediagbonya, (2012) quoted the Executive Secretary of the National Universities Commission as stating that the quality and focus of the training offered by universities are not in tune with the needs of the society and has led to high graduates unemployment in Nigeria as the skills they possess are not directly relevant to the needs of the labour market, hence rendering them unemployable. The authors further affirmed that Industrial Training Fund (ITF) was established in 1971 to bridge the gap between theory and practice in educational institutions. But a wide gap still exists escalating the level of unemployment. Hence, the Nigerian government made entrepreneurship studies a compulsory course in all higher institutions to equip graduates with entrepreneurship skills.

Okereke and Okoroafor (2011) asserted that entrepreneurial skills have been acknowledged as potent and viable tools for self-empowerment, job creation and economic survival. Business education as a discipline is designed to turn out knowledgeable and skilful graduates who will succeed in teaching, office work or entrepreneurship. It is therefore, surprising and at the same time disappointing that many of them are circulating curriculum vitae in search of scanty employment opportunities because they appear not to adequately possess entrepreneurial skills for self-employment. This makes it imperative to assess the extent the entrepreneurial skills are needed for self-employment by business education graduates in Delta State.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to assess the extent entrepreneurial skills are needed for self-employment by business education graduates in Delta State. Specifically, the study proceeded to determine the extent:

1. Accounting skills are needed for self-employment by business education graduates in Delta State.
2. Office technology management skills are needed for self-employment by business education graduates in Delta State.
3. Marketing skills are needed for self-employment by business education graduates in Delta State.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. *To what extent are accounting skills needed for self-employment by business education graduates in Delta State?*
2. *To what extent are office technology and management skills needed for self-employment by business education graduates in Delta State?*
3. *To what extent are marketing skills needed for self-employment by business education graduates in Delta State?*

Hypotheses

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

1. There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female respondents on the extent accounting skills are needed for self-employment by business education graduates in Delta State
2. There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female respondents on the extent office technology and management skills are needed for self-employment by business education graduates in Delta State
3. There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female respondents on the extent marketing skills are needed for self-employment by business education graduates in Delta State

Literature Review

Literatures for this study were reviewed under:

Accounting skills and entrepreneurship

Accounting is an area of study that equips recipients with knowledge, skills and attitude necessary for efficient financial calculation required for occupational competence, and economic activities of an organization. The activities are measured, recorded and communicated to interested parties for analysis and interpretation. These activities are very important for the survival of any organization. Ahukannah, Ndinechi and Arukwe (1989) and Umunnah (1992) opined that the roles of accounting in the operation of a business enterprise include recording financial data, analyzing financial data, preparing accounting statements and communicating financial information to employers.

Accounting skills are the totality of skills ranging from record keeping; financial management and reporting skills that are expected to promote effective financial management of any business enterprise. Consequently, Carland and Carland (2009) and Akande (2011) affirmed that financial management contributes to business development. Attention directing skills enable the owner/ manager to make vital decision on production and pricing issues while reporting skills describe the method and technique by which business information are reported to the stakeholder. Entrepreneurs are expected to possess accounting skills for their business growth and development.

Oladejo (2008) saw accounting as basically an information system that provides economic information to decision makers. It is a financial information system that provides the guide and direction for business growth and development. Accounting transcends record making machinery to taking vital economic and investment decisions for owners and stakeholders (Frankwood, 2007).

Office Technology and Management Skills and Entrepreneurship

Currently discussions at business conferences and periodicals centre on what is happening in offices and organizations. This is as a result of various complexities in the office system. As a result of the constant changes in technological trends and economic flux, organizations under-go dramatic changes. Technical advances, new business procedures, international movements and automation - all seem to pose great challenges to the office secretary of today. The rapid scientific climate and technological changes in the office appear to be uncomfortable for the secretary who can just type and write shorthand.

Secretarial functions play vital and pivotal roles in the day-to-day management of an organization, hence, Okoye (1999) opined that the role of the secretary has been affected with the invasion of sophistication and technological dynamism in office activities as secretaries now work on computer terminals that are connected to

networks like the internet. Consequently, the fear of office automation replacing the secretary is seemingly more real than imagined.

Secretarial education in Nigerian Institutions was recently changed to office technology and management. Okpan (2006) and Okoro and Amagoh (2008) identified several office technology and management skills such as, ability to understand the different filing systems, ability to manage information effectively, ability to follow trend in information technology, ability to produce mailable letters, ability to effectively manipulate hardware components of the computer and use various applications among others. As office technology and management options in business education programme and the skills are very important for organizational success, it behoves, business education graduates to acquire them for success in self-employment.

Marketing Skills and Entrepreneurship

Marketing should cut across all frontiers if effective survival is to take place in the economy. Zimmerer, Scarborough and Wilson (2009) defined marketing, as the process of creating and delivering desired goods and services to customers. The secret to successful marketing is to understand what your target customers need, demand, and want before your competitors can offer them the products and services that will satisfy those needs, demands, and wants, and to provide customers services, convenience, and value so that they will keep coming back.

Unfortunately, there appears to be a sizeable gap between sound marketing principles and actual marketing practices among small businesses. In a business, the marketing function cuts across the entire company, affecting every aspect of its operation from finance and production to hiring and purchasing as well as the company's ultimate success. As competition for customers become more intense, business owners must understand the importance of developing creative marketing strategies. Their success and survival depend on it. An effective marketing campaign does not require an entrepreneur to spend large amount of money, but it does demand creativity, ingenuity, and an understanding of customers buying habits. Okpan (2006) identified marketing skills such as ability to capture and retain customers, ability to promote and sell the organizational product, ability to analyse demand and supply situations and ability to acquire effective sales habits among others.

Method

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The population was 377 business education graduates of the five tertiary institutions in Delta state offering business education programme. The population was located through the Alumni

Association located at the institutions. The entire population was studied without sampling because the size was manageable. A 30-item structured questionnaire titled Entrepreneurial Skills for Business Education Graduates Questionnaire (ESBEGQ) was used for the study. It was developed by the researchers from the literature reviewed. The instrument had three clusters according to the research questions and five response options of Very High Extent (VHE), Higher Extent (FIE), Moderate Extent (ME), Low Extent (LE), and Very Low Extent (VLE). It was validated by five experts (three in business education and two in measurement and evaluation). To establish the reliability of the instrument, it was administered on 30 business education graduates from the University of Benin in Edo State. A grand coefficient of .80 was obtained using Cronbach Alpha (α) reliability for internal consistency of the instrument with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Data collected from the study were analyzed with the arithmetic mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions and determine the homogeneity or otherwise of the respondent's opinion while z-test inferential statistics was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Research Question One: To what extent are accounting skills needed for self-employment by business education graduates in Delta State?

Table 1: Respondents Mean ratings and Standard Deviation on the Extent Business Education Graduates in Delta State need Accounting Skills for Self-employment

S/N	Item	\bar{X}	SD	Decision
1.	Ability to interpret financial statement	3.27	1.42	Moderate Extent
2.	Knowledge of accounts as a skill for economic survival	3.46	1.25	Moderate Extent
3.	Preparing bank reconciliation statements	3.38	1.26	Moderate Extent
4.	Preparing daily cash reports as an accounting skill for economic survival	3.87	0.97	High Extent
5.	Ability to understand payroll and various deductions	3.35	1.31	Moderate Extent
6.	Calculating depreciation as an accounting skill for economic survival	3.32	1.34	Moderate Extent
7.	Acknowledging of factors involved in decision to grant loan by financial houses	3.49	1.21	Moderate Extent
8.	Ability to avoid unplanned expenditures	3.95	0.96	High Extent
9.	Ability to solve difficult and complex accounting and related financial problems	3.31	1.36	Moderate Extent

10.	Ability to find sources of capital to start business and the recording of business transactions	3.89	1.02	High Extent
	Cluster Mean	3.53	1.21	High Extent
N=341				

The data in Table 1 reveal that three out of the ten accounting skills listed had mean score ranging from 3.87 to 3.95. This means that business education graduates in Delta State need them at a high extent. The rest had mean ratings from 3.27-3.49 showing that they are needed at a moderate extent. However the cluster mean of 353 shows that business education graduates in Delta State need accounting skills to a high extent for self-employment. The standard deviations for most of the items are within the same range showing that respondents are not wide apart in their opinions.

Research Question Two

To what extent are office technology and management skills needed for self-employment by business education graduates in Delta State?

Table 2: Respondents Mean ratings and Standard Deviation on the Extent Business Education Graduates in Delta State need Office Technology and Management for Self-employment

S/N	Item	\bar{X}	SD	Decision
11.	Ability to understand the organizations method and procedures of filling as an office technology management skill	3.25	1.36	Moderate Extent
12.	Ability to manage information effectively	3.87	1.03	High Extent
13.	Competencies to follow trend in information technology	4.65	0.48	Very High Extent
14.	Ability to write mailable letters	3.68	1.23	High Extent
15.	Microsoft office proficiency for reduction unemployment	3.78	1.10	High Extent
16.	Ability to work without supervision for effective job performance	3.52	1.18	High Extent
17.	Competencies in communication skills for economic survival	3.68	1.09	High Extent
18.	Processing information accurately on the job as an office technology management skill for economic survival	3.51	1.30	High Extent
19.	Ability to use and manipulate the computer system in resolving societal problems	4.65	0.48	Very High Extent
20.	Operating business machines in meeting societal needs	3.56	1.20	High Extent
	Cluster Mean	3.82	1.05	High Extent
N=341				

The data in Table 2 reveal that item eleven had mean score of 3.25. This means that business education graduates in Delta State need it at a moderate extent. Items thirteen and, nineteen had mean scores of 4.65 each. This means that business education

graduates in Delta State need these items to a very high extent. The rest had mean ratings from 3.5 1-3.87 showing that they are needed at a high extent. More so, the cluster mean of 3.82 shows that business education graduates in Delta State need office technology and management skills to a high extent for self-employment. The standard deviations for most of the items are within the same range showing that respondents are not wide apart in their opinions.

Research Question Three

To what extent are marketing skills needed for self-employment by business education graduates in Delta State?

Table 3: Respondents Mean ratings and Standard Deviation on the Extent Business Education Graduates in Delta State need Marketing Skills for Self-employment

S/N	Item	\bar{X}	SD	Decision
21.	Ability to capture and retain the attention of customers as a marketing skill for economic survival	3.72	1.06	High Extent
22.	Ability to promote and sell the organizational product	3.57	1.21	High Extent
23.	Skills to analyse demand and supply situations	3.24	1.38	Moderate Extent
24.	Ability to acquire effective distributive skills	3.33	1.35	Moderate Extent
25.	Skills in discovering and identifying wants and needs of a client as a marketing skill for reduction in unemployment	3.57	1.21	High Extent
26.	Ability to deliver and distribute the products and services of an organization	3.72	1.06	High Extent
27.	Ability for new product launches, start-ups, and sales turnarounds as a marketing skill for economic survival	2.99	1.51	Moderate Extent
28.	Promotion as a marketing skill for economic survival	3.57	1.21	High Extent
29.	Selling skills for increased sales of organizational products as a marketing skill for better standard of living	3.24	1.36	Moderate Extent
30.	Skills in print advertising of programs as a marketing skill for economic survival	3.11	1.45	Moderate Extent
	Cluster Mean	3.41	1.28	Moderate Extent

N=341

The data in Table 3 reveal that five out of the ten marketing skills listed had mean score ranging from 2.99 to 3.33. This means that business education graduates in Delta State need these items to a moderate extent. The rest had mean ratings from 3.57-3.72 showing that they are needed a high extent. However, the cluster mean of 3.41 shows that business education graduates in Delta State need marketing skills to a moderate

extent for self-employment. The standard deviations for most of the items are within the same range showing that respondents are not wide apart in their opinions.

Hypotheses Testing

Ho₁: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female respondents on the extent accounting skills are needed for self-employment by business education graduates in Delta State

Table 4: Two-tailed Z-test Result of The Mean Responses of Male and Female Respondents on the Accounting Skills that are needed for Self-employment by Business Education Graduates

Category	N	\bar{X}	Std	Df	Level of sig.	z-cal	z-crit	Decision
Male	143	3.53	1.23					
Female	198	3.61	1.17	339	0.05	1.09	<1.96	NS

The data in Table 4 show that at 0.05 level of significance and degree of freedom of 339 that all the items tested are not significant. The calculated z-value is 0.16 which is less than the critical z-value of 1.96. This means that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female respondents on the extent accounting skills are needed for self-employment by business education graduates in Delta State. Therefore, the null hypothesis was upheld.

Ho₂: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female respondents on the extent office technology and management skills are needed for self-employment by business education graduates in Delta State

Table 5: Two-tailed Z-test Result of The Mean Responses of Male and Female Respondents on the Office Technology and Management Skills that are needed for Self-employment by Business Education Graduates

Category	N	\bar{X}	Std	Df	Level of sig.	z-cal	z-crit	Decision
Male	143	3.87	1.23					
Female	198	3.61	1.17	339	0.05	1.09	<1.96	NS

The data in Table 5 show that at 0.05 level of significance and degree of freedom of 339 that all the items tested are not significant. The calculated z-value is 1.09 which is less than the critical z-value of 1.96. This means that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female respondents on the extent office technology and management skills are needed for self-employment by business education graduates in Delta State. Therefore, the null hypothesis was upheld.

H₀₃: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female respondents on the extent marketing skills are needed for self-employment by business education graduates in Delta State

Table 6: Two-tailed z-test Result of The Mean Responses of Male and Female Respondents on the Marketing Skills that are needed for Self-employment by Business Education Graduates

Category	N	\bar{X}	Std	Df	Level of sig.	z-cal	z-crit	Decision
Male	143	3.80	1.27					
Female	198	3.12	1.11	339	0.05	5.07	<1.96	S

The data in Table 5 show that at 0.05 level of significance and degree of freedom of 339 that all the items tested are significant. The calculated z-value is 5.07 which is greater than the critical z-value of 1.96. This means that there is a significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female respondents on the extent marketing skills are needed for self-employment by business education graduates in Delta State. Therefore, the null hypothesis was not upheld.

Discussion

Accounting Skills Needed by Business Education Graduates

The findings of the study revealed that accounting skills are needed to a high extent by business education graduates in Delta State for self-employment. This finding confirms the views of Akpotowoh and Amahi (2006) and Salome (2012) that accounting and financial skills are very vital for entrepreneurial success. Also, the fact that there was no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female respondent.-s means that they consider accounting skills as highly needed by entrepreneurs irrespective of gender. This means that gender has significant effect on the respondent's views and could be due to the fact that males are more outgoing and enjoy moving around freely than females.

Office Technology Management Skills Needed by Business Education Graduates

The study found out that business education graduates in Delta State need office technology and management skills to a high extent for self-employment. This findings agrees with the views of Okpan (2006) and Okoro and Amagoh (2008) who affirmed that office technology and management skills as very important for organizational performance and success. In addition, there was no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female respondents on the extent office technology and management skills are needed for self-employment by business education graduates in

Delta State. This means that male and female entrepreneurs alike highly need office technology and management skills for success.

Marketing Skills Needed by Business Education Graduates

Findings of the study relative to marketing skills show that they are needed to a moderate extent by business education graduates in Delta State for self-employment. This findings corroborated the reports of Zimmerer, Scarborough & Wilson (2009) and Business Marketing institute (2013) that only basic marketing skills are needed for success by owner/manager or entrepreneur. The respondents differed significantly in their mean ratings on the extent marketing skills are needed by business education students in Delta State for self-employment.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, the researchers concluded that entrepreneurial skills needed by business education graduates in Delta State for self-employment include accounting skills, office technology and management skills, and marketing skills.

Recommendations

In line with the findings of the study and conclusion drawn, the following recommendations were made:

1. Business educators should be more creative and innovative in their instruction to their students with relevant entrepreneurial skills to help them succeed in self-employment.
2. Business education curriculum designers should include more courses on entrepreneurship training and development to give the graduate proper grounding on skills that will enhance their entrepreneurial success.
3. Government and other stakeholders in tertiary institutions should endeavour to provide adequate facilities and laboratories to facilitate the practical entrepreneurial activities for business education students to motivate them to go into entrepreneurial ventures on graduation.

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