

Entrepreneurial Skills Need of Business Education Students for Small Scale Enterprise Development in Cross River State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The main purpose of this study was to determine entrepreneurial skills need of business education students for small scale enterprise development in Cross River State. Three specific objectives, three research questions and three hypotheses guided the study. The descriptive survey research design was used for the study. The population of the study was 408 respondents made up of 390 Business Education students and 18 Business Education lecturers in Cross River State University. The sample size was 306 respondents made up of 293 Business Education students and 13 Business Education lecturers. Convenience sampling technique was used to select respondents for the study. A structured questionnaire entitled, "Entrepreneurial Skills Need of Business Education Students Questionnaire (ESNBESQ)" was used for data collection. The instrument was given to three research experts for face validation. The internal reliability of the instrument was determined using Cronbach Alpha method and the reliability index of 0.87 was obtained. The data collected were analysed using Mean and Improvement Need Index (INI) to answer the research questions while independent t-test was used to test the hypotheses at .05 level of significance. The findings revealed that there is skill need and significant difference in the mean responses of students and Business Education lecturers on planning, communication and time management skills for small scale enterprise development in Cross River State. It is recommended among others that Cross River State governments through Ministry of Finance should increase budgetary allocation to entrepreneurial skill training to ensure that Cross River State Universities get the needed finance for training of Business Education students in business planning.

Keywords: Development, Education, Enterprise, Entrepreneurial, Skills

Introduction

The role of small-scale enterprises (SSEs) in economic development cannot be over emphasized. Small scale enterprises have popularly been argued to contribute positively to economic growth of countries of the world through their positive effect on employment, income redistribution, high standard of living, Gross domestic product position, balance of payment promotion, among others. The term small scale enterprise (SSE's) has no generally established definition. Kadiri (2016) noted that the criteria for classification of an enterprise as micro, small, medium or large vary from one country to another, depending on whether it is developed or developing country. The Small and Medium Enterprise Development Agency of

Nigeria (SMEDAN, 2013) defined small scale enterprises as firms with not more than ten employees and total asset of between five million Naira and fifty million naira. Esuh and Adebayo (2015) noted that small scale enterprises are firms or businesses arising as a result of entrepreneurial activities of individuals.

In both developing and developed countries, small scale enterprises play important roles in the process of industrialization and economic growth, by significantly contributing to employment generation, income generation and catalyzing development in urban and rural areas (Olutula, 2016). Small scale enterprises play a central role in employment creation and serve as driver of economic growth in Nigeria by ensuring a shift from crude oil export as a major source of government revenue to an industrial and service driven economy. In realization of this role, concerted efforts by successive governments at all levels in Nigeria, in terms of policy guidelines and interventions have been initiated and implemented to accelerate the growth, viability and development of the small-scale enterprise sector.

However, the state of small-scale enterprises in Cross River State appears not to be easily recognized or felt in the socio-economic development of the state. There seems to be low performance of the sector causing some small-scale enterprises to be crumbling on daily basis. The researcher presumes that this could be due to some factors such as difficulty in accessing micro-finances, inadequate management and lack of experience and entrepreneurial skills. Akeke *et al.* (2022) contended that every business requires certain skills for proper management and when most of these enterprises are not managed by those who are competent there is tendency for closure of the business. Therefore, acquisition of entrepreneurial skills by business education students could help to solve some of the problems small scale enterprises are facing. Students who are exposed to these skills would be able to run successful enterprises in Cross River State.

Udukeke and Usoro (2023) defined entrepreneurship as the creative process of utilizing resources for the introduction of a new product or the addition of incremental value to an existing product, process, method, market, project or an organization so as to meet human needs profitably. In the words of Akpan and Akpan (2022), entrepreneurship education can help students opt in for new venture creation, develop positive and favourable attitudes towards entrepreneurial situations and also propose new career perspectives for part or all of one's professional life.

Entrepreneurial skills are those skills that help in enterprise development. These skills seek to provide students with knowledge, ability and motivation to ensure development and success of businesses. Students who acquire entrepreneurial skills need not be found looking for white-collar jobs after graduation, because the students are already equipped with the necessary skills to become self-reliant and employers of labour in different discipline. Entrepreneurial skills empower an entrepreneur with ability to analyze situations, opportunities, and environment and assist the business manager in managing and assuming a business risk and reward. These skills are embedded in business education programme at all levels.

Business education is one of the courses offered in the universities with the central aim of building the capacity of its recipients for enterprise development. One remarkable and important characteristic of business education programme is that its products can function independently as self-employed and employers of labour. Business education programme prepares students for entry into and advancement in jobs within the business environment. It is an educational programme which involves acquisition of skills, knowledge and competences which makes the recipient/beneficiary self-reliant. As defined by Usen *et al.* (2019), business education is a programme of study that prepares students for skill acquisition in different specialized areas such as office occupations (secretaries), book keeping (accountants) as well as teaching (accounting teachers and e-commerce professionals).

Business education programme at all levels of education has a well-articulated curriculum encompassing accounting, management, office technology and marketing. At the university level, the programme is expected to equip the students with skills such as public relation skills, communication skills, planning skills, time management skills and leadership skills among other skills, and all these skills are embedded in the university curriculum for business educators. The programme is designed to inculcate in students the relevant entrepreneurial skills and competencies in different areas of specialization for enterprise development after graduation. One of the cardinal objectives of business education is to provide orientation and basic skills with which to start a life of work for those who may not further educational training. In consonance with this, Usen *et al.* (2020) agreed that business education is meant to prepare individuals for self-reliance, self-actualisation, job- creation, and wealth-creation. The successful implementation of this program will promote self-independence, creativity, economic well-being, and a reduction in Nigerian unemployment through enterprise development. For successful enterprise development, possession of related skill is a prerequisite.

Skill is simply defined as ability, capacity or proficiency to carry out tasks with pre-determined results often within a given amount of time and energy. Skills are acquired abilities or expertise developed through learning and experience. They can be categorized into various types including technical, soft and transferrable skills (Eminue and Udo, 2024). Therefore, skills need is operationally defined as those capabilities individuals ought to have acquired to help them scale through in their respective discipline. The selected entrepreneurial skills needed for small scale enterprises development in the context of this study include but not limited to planning skill, communication skill and time management skill.

Planning skill is entrepreneurial skill component of business education. Planning skills refer to talents, experience and knowledge related to mapping out and executing the steps required to meet an objective or goal. Planning involves goal setting, development of plans to achieve goals in a competitive environment. It also has to do with business analysis, time management, managing expectations, setting expectations, project management, estimation, forecasting, financial analysis, procurement and risk management (Igwe, 2015). In the view of Onoh (2016), business education graduates need strong planning skills to enable them succeed in business in the face of challenging competitors. Nwangwu (2017), noted that planning skill

is very indispensable to business education graduates, as no business enterprise can stand the test of time, if proper planning is ignored. The author added that most graduates of business education had hardly sustained their business enterprises due to lack of effective planning from the outset. This implies that planning is crucial for creation and sustenance of business enterprise that will stand the test of time.

Another important entrepreneurial skill for small scale enterprise development is communication skill. Since organisation comprises more than one person, the need for communication is critical to its functioning. The acquisition of appropriate communication skills offers the individual the unique strategy for a successful business venture. The individual in a business environment for example, should be able to communicate and render his services to consumers so that they would appreciate the content and value of the product as well as develop the measures of self-marketing for the product. Business education graduates are expected to possess relevant skills and knowledge in the area of communication to avoid business failure and to run businesses effectively as stated by Usoro and Ufot (2014). The authors added that communication skill is one of the generic skills required for the fresh graduates to be successful at their job.

Time management skill is also very critical for enterprise development. Time is a vital resource of every organization. Incidentally, time is very transient, being that once it is spent, it cannot be recovered. Also, time is never enough for organizations therefore, they need to plan for and manage all activities that contribute to their performance in a scheduled manner. Ahmad *et al.* (2014) was of the opinion that time management represents the act or process of exercising conscious control over the amount of time spent on specific activities, especially to increase effectiveness, efficiency or productivity. time management is about organizing tasks or events which involves the estimation of how much time a task will take to complete, when it must be completed and adjusting events accordingly that could interfere with task completion so as to ensure appropriate amount of time is spent (Adejojo, 2014). There is need to manage time since resources are limited. Some students find it difficult to manage their time while in school and some could extend this to their inability to manage their business. Time management involves the careful planning of the use of time in order to carry out and accomplish certain activities as desired. A good time management requires leadership skills.

Statement of the Problem

It is undeniable fact that only a few graduates of business education venture into enterprise development. Some of these graduates are waiting for white collar jobs which are grossly unavailable instead of creating jobs for themselves and others. Some are scared of failing in their chosen line of business while others may not want to try. This prompted the researcher to ask questions like could it be that these graduates do not have the requisite skills to start, run successfully managed small scale enterprises?

Small scale enterprises have been found to contribute significantly to economic growth through capacity building of individuals who in turn make meaningful contribution to the development of the nation. This is however possible when there is no untimely closure of such

enterprises, as they are expected to reduce the high rate of unemployment by creating employment opportunities. But in spite of the importance of small scale enterprises in the State economy, it seems that in Cross River State some small scale enterprises are still failing and closed down within the few years of their existence. The effect of this is decline in the internally generated revenue accruable to the state, increase in the rate of unemployment, poverty and crime, as well as low Gross Domestic Product (GDP), low per capita income and high dependency ratio.

The researcher is worried of what could be responsible for the failure and lack of development of small scale enterprise in Cross River State. The question is, could it be attributed to lack of entrepreneurial skills acquisition by business education students for the development of small-scale enterprises such as: planning skills, communication skills and time management skills? Therefore, this study sought to determine the entrepreneurial skills need of business education students for Small Scale Enterprise Development in Cross River State, Nigeria.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this was to determine the entrepreneurial skills need of business education students for small scale enterprise development in Cross River State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study determined:

- i. the planning skills need of business education students for small scale enterprise development in Cross River State.
- ii. the communication skills need of business education students for small scale enterprise development in Cross River State
- iii. the time management skills need of business education students for small scale enterprise development in Cross River State.

Research Questions

The study was designed to provide answers to the following research questions:

- i. What are the planning skills need of business education students for small scale enterprise development in Cross River State?
- ii. What are the communication skills need of business education students for small scale enterprise development in Cross River State?
- iii. What are the time management skills need of business education students for small scale enterprise development in Cross River State?

Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 levels of significance.

- H₀₁ There is no significant difference in mean responses of students and business education lecturers on planning skills need for small scale enterprise development in Cross River State.

H₀₂ There is no significant difference in mean responses of students and business education lecturers on communication skills need for small scale enterprise development in Cross River State.

Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design. This design sought to collect data on the opinions of the respondents with a view to examining the difference of entrepreneurial skills need of business students for Small Scale Enterprise Development in Cross River State, Nigeria. According to Eyo (2015), a descriptive survey is a research design used to obtain general overviews of a subject without determining cause and effect relationship. This design was appropriate for this study since the researcher collected data from the respondents through using questionnaire.

The study was carried out in Cross River State. Cross River State is one of the six states in the South-South geopolitical zone of Nigeria. The population of this study comprised 408 respondents, made up of 18 business education lecturers and 390 level 300 and 400 business education students

The sample of this study was 306 respondents, comprising 13 business education lecturers and 293 business education students. Seventy-five per cent of the population was used for the study. The data collected were analysed using Improvement Need Index (INI) (the difference between the Mean rating of business education students and business education lecturers) to answer the research questions, while the null hypotheses were tested using independent t-test at 0.05 level of significance. The Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 25.0 was used to analyze the data. The decision on research questions was determined using Improvement Need Index (INI). The mean of each skill needed by business education students as prescribed by the lecturers was represented by (N), while the mean of business education students' performance was represented by (P). The difference between the two means (N-P) was determined to indicate the skills performance gap (PG).

- (a) Where the value of performance gap (PG) is positive (+), it indicates that there is need for the skills improvement because the level at which the skills are needed is higher than the level at which business education students possessed it.
- (b) A negative (-) difference implies that there is no need for skills improvement because the level at which the business education students possessed it is higher than the level at which it is needed.
- (c) Zero (0) indicates that there is no need for skills improvement because the level at which the skill is needed is the same level at which the business education students. Possessed it

In order to test the null hypotheses, the P-value was compared with the Alpha value (level of significance) of 0.05. When the P-value was less than or equal to the Alpha value

($p \leq 0.05$) the null hypothesis (H_0) was rejected. On the other hand, when the P-value was greater than the Alpha value ($P > 0.05$) the null hypothesis was retained (not rejected).

Research Question 1: What are the planning skills needs of business education students for small scale enterprise development in Cross River State?

Table 1: Performance gap analysis of planning skills need of business education students for small scale enterprise development in Cross River State n=306

S/N	Planning skills need	$\bar{X}_N$	$\bar{X}_P$	$\bar{X}_N - \bar{X}_P$	Remarks
1	Identification of opportunities	3.22	2.65	0.57	SN
2	Determination of objective.	3.39	2.10	1.29	SN
3	Forecasting the future and data collection.	3.29	2.79	0.5	SN
4	Identification of alternative course of action	3.29	2.76	0.53	SN
5	Evaluation of the alternative course of action	3.38	2.21	1.17	SN
6	Ability to articulate economic activities for profit purposes.	3.38	2.69	0.69	SN
7	Ability to set achievable goals of a business.	3.38	2.85	0.53	SN
	Cluster Mean	3.33	2.58	0.75	SN

SN= Skill Needed

The result in Table 1 showed that planning skills need of business education students for small scale enterprise development in Cross River State. All the items showed planning skill needs of business education students for small scale enterprise development with a cluster mean of 0.75. The item on the evaluation of alternative course of action has the highest mean gap of 1.17, while the item on forecasting the future and data collection has the lowest mean of 0.5. Since the cluster mean of all the 7 items on planning skills need is positive (0.75), it implies that Business Education students need improvement in planning skills for small scale enterprise development in Cross River State.

Research Question 2: What are the communication skills need of business education students for small scale enterprise development in Cross River State?

Table 2: Performance gap analysis of communication skills need of business education students for small scale enterprise development in Cross River State n=306

S/N	Communication skills need	$\bar{X}_N$	$\bar{X}_P$	$\bar{X}_N - \bar{X}_P$	Remarks
1	Ability to display good listening skills.	3.02	2.49	0.53	SN
2	Ability to use the right word at the right time	2.98	1.39	1.59	SN
3	Ability to interpret message correctly	3.02	2.40	0.62	SN

4	Ability to choose appropriate media for information dissemination.	3.35	2.17	1.18	SN
5	Ability to relate information appropriately to concern parties	3.02	1.98	1.04	SN
6	Ability to write clearly and concisely to maintain customers.	3.02	1.26	1.76	SN
7	Ability to sustain discussion for a long time for the growth of the business	3.54	2.43	1.11	SN
Cluster Mean		3.13	2.01	1.12	SN

SN= Skill Needed

The result in Table 2 showed that communication skills need of business education students for small scale enterprise development in Cross River State. The result reveals that the overall performance gap of all the 7 items on communication skills need is positive (1.12). The item on ability to write clearly and concisely to maintain customers has the highest mean gap of 1.76, while the item on ability to display good listening skills has the lowest mean of 0.53. Since the cluster mean of all the 7 items on communication skills need is positive (1.12), it implies that Business Education students need improvement in communication skills for small scale enterprise development in Cross River State.

Discussion of Findings

The finding from research question one revealed that business education students need improvement in planning skills. The result of hypothesis one also revealed that there is a significant difference in the mean responses of students and business education lecturers on planning skills need of business education students for small scale enterprise development in Cross River State. The result was because the level of planning skills of business education students was lower than the benchmark provided by business education lecturers. Therefore, the overall level of planning skills possessed by students was low resulting to a positive performance gap, meaning that skill improvement is needed by business education students in planning for small scale enterprise development in Cross River State. The finding of this study is in agreement with earlier finding by Adizu and Igwe (2023) who showed that undergraduates of business education need planning and organizing skills in a high extent for the establishment of small-scale enterprises in Rivers State. The finding is also in agreement with another research finding by Usman (2019) who revealed that planning skills are not only needed by students for enterprise development, but also a correlate of self-employability of business education students in Nasarawa State. Therefore, the possession of planning skills would enable business education students to be owners and good managers small scale enterprises in Cross River State after graduation.

The finding from research question two revealed that business education students need improvement in communication skills for small scale enterprise development in Cross River State. The result of hypothesis two revealed that there is a significant difference in the mean

responses of students and business education lecturers on communication skills need of business education students for small scale enterprise development in Cross River State. The result was because the level of communication skills of business education students was lower than the benchmark provided by business education lecturers. Therefore, the overall level of performance by students was low resulting to a positive performance gap, meaning that skill improvement is needed by business education students in communication for small scale enterprise development in Cross River State. The finding of this study is in line with the finding by Afolabi *et al.* (2021) who found that communication skills are highly required by entrepreneurs for sustainable development. This implies that before graduation, business education students who are potential entrepreneurs should be exposed to relevant communication skills to be able to win the trust of customers for sustainable business development. The finding is also in line with the finding by Momoh and Ibrahim (2015) who found that business education students in Kano State showed greater proficiency in the basic knowledge of computer component of electronic communication skills but need electronic mail (email) and internet skill for effective use of information and communication technologies. Business education students need to acquire a substantial level of competencies in communication skills for business growth and development in Cross River State.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study. It was concluded that entrepreneurial skills play significant role in small scale enterprise development in Cross River State. Business education students need improvement in planning, communication time management, leadership and public relation skills for small scale enterprise development. Therefore, if business education students are given more training or are adequately exposed to the prescribed level of skills in planning, communication and time management it would enhance small scale enterprise development in Cross River State.

Recommendations

Based on the conclusion of the study the following recommendations are made.

- i. Cross River State governments through Ministry of Finance should increase budgetary allocation to entrepreneurial skill training to ensure that Cross River state universities get the needed finance for training of business education students in business planning.
- ii. Ministry of Education in Cross River state should ensure that every student in Cross River state university has free access to information and communication technologies to enhance acquisition of communication skills for small scale enterprise development.
- iii. Management of Cross River state university should help business education students to improve their time management skills through seminars and workshops to give them opportunity to update their skills.

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