

Assessment of Management Competencies Possessed by Business Education Postgraduates Students for Entrepreneurial Ventures in South-East/South- South States

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Abstract

Business Education postgraduates University Students, by the nature of their programme, ought to possess relevant management competencies for effective entrepreneurship but spontaneous surveillance and pragmatic reports show that they are not doing well in this aspect. Therefore, this study assessed Business Education Postgraduate Students and Management competencies in handling entrepreneurship Ventures in South – East and South – South States. Three research questions and three hypotheses guided the study. Descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. The sample size consisted of 388 Business Education postgraduates who are currently running their postgraduate programme in Universities in the South-South and South-East geopolitical zones in Nigeria. The questionnaire was adequately validated by experts in Business Education and measurement and evaluation. The internal consistency of the instrument was determined using cronbach alpha with a reliability coefficient of 0.93 was used for data collection. The mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions while Z-test was used to test the hypotheses at .05 level of significance. The result revealed that Business Education graduates are competent in ability to plan for small or medium scale business, ability to organize small scale business, ability to source funds for the running of a small scale business among others. It was recommended that Business Education graduates should undergo training on interpersonal, creativity and conflict resolution in order for them to have more competencies management skills on the said areas.

Keywords: Assessment, management competencies, possessed, university Business Education graduate

Introduction

Management competencies are critical in any organisation. Only in the last couple of decades the importance of managerial competencies were realized and researchers started studying the required competencies to be successful and effective managers (Boyatzis, 2007). Today, almost all companies use competency based human resources management to some extent (Boyatzis, 2007). But employing managers who possess required competencies is not an easy task to accomplish. Not only employing the right person to the right position solves the problems, because the competencies required for a specific position may change in time,

and also management and or operational blindness occurs after a while (Altinay at al., 2012 & Aslan, 2016). The real challenge lies on to keep the competencies sharpened all the time.

Identifying competencies required for managers has been the subject of several types of research. After extensive review of research papers, various articles, books, and web links etc., Bhardwaj and Punia (2013) listed the common competencies that researchers have emphasized on as: communication, team-working, proactiveness, vision, self-management, result-orientation, strategic-orientation, ambition, persistence, decision making, risk taking, and creativity. Cripe (2001) defined 31 competencies and puts them in three categories: Competencies dealing with people; Competencies dealing with business, and competencies dealing with self-management. Smart (1998) cited in Bhardwaj and Punia (2013) defined a total 50 competencies and groups them by the ease of changeability as “relatively easy to change, harder but doable, and very difficult to change”. these competencies are: risk taking, judgment, intelligence, leading edge, strategic skills, analysis skills, education, pragmatism, creativity, experience, track record, conceptual ability, organization/planning, resourcefulness, integrity, self-awareness, excellence standards, assertiveness, communications – oral, communications – written, independence, inspiring followership, stress management, energy, first impression, adaptability, passion, customer focus, likability, ambition, political savvy, listening, tenacity, selecting a players, redeploying b/c players, team player, negotiation skills, coaching / training, persuasiveness, goal setting, team builder, empowerment, change leadership, performance management, diversity, running meetings, conflict management, compatibility of needs, credible vision, balance in life.

Business Education is that aspect of the total educational programme that offers the knowledge, skills understanding and attitudes needed to perform in the business world as a producer and/or consumer of goods and services that business offers (Uzo-Onkonkwo (2007). Okoro (2009) stated that Business Education means education for and about business, or training in business skills and competencies necessary for use in business offices, clerical occupations and business policy analysis. It is a teaching that gives an occupational identity. Etifit, Eminue and Udoh (2016) viewed business education as an aspect of Vocational Business Education programme that gives training and imparts necessary skills that will provide the recipients with the intellectual and professional background, adequate for their assignment and makes the recipients adaptable to changing situations in the world of work. Business Education is one of the disciplines, which contribute to economic development of any nation.

The objective of business education is to aid in developing within an individual the knowledge, skills, abilities, abilities and attitudes that will enable him/her to use sound reasoning in making personal business decision as a consumer or producer of goods and services. Business Education in the context of this study is responsible for equipping students with skills, attributes, knowledge and behaviour required for teaching, entrepreneurship, administrative and clerical work. The most important aspect of business education all over

the world is the provision of entrepreneurial skills required for effective operation of small and medium scale businesses. Business Education graduates are expected to possess an extensive knowledge of entrepreneurial skills.

Entrepreneurship is the process of bringing together creative and innovative ideas, combining them with management and organisation skills in order to combine people, money and resources to meet an identified need and thereby create wealth. It is also the willingness and ability of an individual to seek out investment opportunities, establish and run a business or enterprise successfully. Entrepreneurship, according to Ademiluyi (2007), is a practical creativeness which combines resources and opportunities in new ways. It involves the application of personal qualities, finance and other resources within the environment for the attainment of business success. Ighalo (2011) perceived entrepreneurship as the process of using available capital in any form for business endeavours in an open and free-market economy for the sole purpose of doing new things within a new philosophy of values and purpose; of utility, quality and use which satisfies needs. Entrepreneurial ventures are innovative business engagement to solve economic problems (Akpan & Etifit, 2018).

Entrepreneurial skill acquisition is a process whereby a person acquires or learns a particular skill or type of behaviour needed for business through training or education (Amadi, 2012). Globally, entrepreneurship skill acquisition programs introduced into business education were meant to provide the level of education or knowledge needed to exploit entrepreneurial opportunity which could help the economic development of such countries (Emaikwu, 2011). Entrepreneurial skill is indispensable for managing retail shop business both for profitability and sustainability. Such skills include; interpersonal skills, creative skills, conflict resolution skills, communication, marketing, book keeping, customers' relations and managerial skills.

Interpersonal relationships can serve as an important mechanism through which the effectiveness, efficiency and quality of services rendered by institutions are gauged, evaluated and measured. It is therefore imperative for public and private organizations to observe, assess and analysis how their workers relate with one another, the customers of the organization, stakeholders and the society (environment). Interpersonal relationship may be seen as intimate, strong, close association and solidarity that exist between and among workers in an organizational setting. Since organizations are majorly characterised by the presence of human resources to coordinate and manage the activities of the organization, interpersonal relationships are inescapable concrete reality of modern organizations.

Writing on interpersonal relationships in the workplace, Reich and Hershcovis (2011), succinctly observe, interpersonal relationships are inevitable reality for all those working in organizations. Defining interpersonal relationships in the workplace, Heaphy and Dutton (2008), made distinguishing remarks of the word "connection and relationship". According to

them a connection in the workplace is said to exist when there is a mutual awareness between and among workers that an interaction has taken place. Connection between and among workers or departmental units may be void of intimacy or characterised by momentary interaction involving the sharing of information that may be official or unofficial in nature. On the other hand, relationship is the product of repeated interactions and connections in the organization. Thus, interpersonal relationships is the product of repeated interactions and connections between and among workers usually involving awareness and contributions of the parties involved (Heaphy and Dutton, 2008; Reich and Herschcovis, 2011). Another important skill required of an entrepreneur is creative skill.

Creativity according to Robert Grahim as reported by Okpara, (2007) consists of anticipation and commitment. Anticipation involves having a vision of something that will become important in the future before anybody else has it. Commitment is the belief that keeps one working to realize the vision despite doubts and discouragement. Okpara, (2007) affirmed that the entrepreneur is primarily concerned with developing new products, processes, or markets, the ability to bring something new into the market. The entrepreneur indulges in original thinking more than any other person thinks and he is able to produce solutions that fly in the face of established knowledge.

Conflict resolution refers to dealing with or removing the cause of the conflict. All organizations, be it simple or complex, possess a range of mechanisms or procedures for managing conflict (El- Rahman, Hosny & Ata, 2018). The success or effectiveness of such procedures can be gauged by the extent to which they limit conflict behaviour and the extent to which they help to achieve a satisfactory solution. The most popular conceptualization of conflict management style is collaborating, accommodating, competing, compromising and avoiding. Individuals who use collaborating style manage conflicts in a direct and cooperative manner and aim to reach a solution collaboratively with other parties (El-Rahman, Hosny & Ata, 2018).

However, those who use accommodating style face conflicts in a passive and accommodating way and follow the decisions of other parties. On the other hand, individuals with a competing style endeavor to force behaviors on others and have much more concern for self than others. Also, individuals who use avoiding style have a tendency to sidestep conflicts whereas those who use compromising style aim to reach mutually agreed decisions between parties (Hamouda, Tah & Hashish, 2012). In fact, these five individual's conflict modes are assessed along with two principle dimensions: Assertiveness and Cooperativeness. Assertiveness attributes the quality in which person attempts to settle his or her own concerns, whereas cooperativeness addresses to some extent person is concerned to satisfy others' wishes (Labraguea & Petitebe, 2017).

The possession of entrepreneurial skills is important in preventing youths from becoming social misfits. For instance, a graduate of Commerce can be gainfully employed in a wage employment or establish a small business of his or her own as a result of skills acquired in school. Evidently, Owualah and Obokoh (2008) were of the opinion that entrepreneurship skills acquired by most secondary school graduates have been of immense benefit in keeping them busy especially during the time he is seeking for admission into University Education. An idle youth does not contribute much to the growth of the nation but rather direct his youthful potentials and strengths in committing crimes and other vices.

In order to bridge the gap and provide entrepreneurship skills, it becomes imperative to identify relevant entrepreneurship skills required for the establishment of small scale businesses by students of Commerce in secondary schools.

Statement of the Problem

Business Education postgraduates' students by their education and training ought to possess the relevant competencies in Entrepreneurship ventures that could enable them establish and run their own businesses successfully. For a Business Education graduate to secure, maintain and sustain a job, the graduate needs more than manipulative skills.

It is disheartening that many Business Education graduates that set their businesses come out with high rate of failure and after 3years of establishment many of the businesses have been liquidated. This uncertainty of success among Business Education graduates in running their businesses is a major concern to prospective entrepreneurs.

Considering poverty rate in Nigeria resulting from lack of appropriate skill acquisition, and knowledge empowerment, Ezeugwu (2006) stated that most graduates of Nigeria institutions of higher learning will continue to search for jobs with their highly graded certificates unless they absorb the culture of challenging their potentials essentially. Aremu (2010) attributed the unemployment problem of Nigeria university graduates to lack of marketable skills. This situation therefore calls for knowledge rearrangement. In the same vein, Isineyi (2008) observed that the needs of the students were not effectively reflected in the gratified of the educational system as most of these graduates do not possess skills that can make them to be independent and self-confident in the face of the current dominant hardship and unemployment rate in the country.

There are doubts about the management competencies possessed by Business Education postgraduates. Therefore, the study sought to assess management competencies possessed by Business Education postgraduate students for Entrepreneurship ventures in South – East and South – South States.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to assess management competencies possessed by Business Education postgraduate students to handle entrepreneurship business challenges in Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Assess the interpersonal competencies possessed by Business Education postgraduates' students for Entrepreneurship ventures in south-East/ South South States.
2. Assess the creative competencies possessed by Business Education postgraduates' students for Entrepreneurship ventures in south-East/ South South States.
3. Assess the conflict resolution competencies possessed by Business Education postgraduates' students for Entrepreneurship ventures in south-East/ South South States.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study:

1. What are the interpersonal competencies possessed by Business Education postgraduates' students for Entrepreneurship ventures in south-East/ South South States?
2. What are the creative competencies possessed by Business Education postgraduates' students for Entrepreneurship ventures in south-East/ South South States?
3. What are the conflict resolution competencies possessed by Business Education postgraduates' students for Entrepreneurship ventures in south-East/ South South States?

Null Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

1. There is no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female Business Education Postgraduates' Students in interpersonal competencies possessed for Entrepreneurship ventures in South-East and South – South States.
2. There is no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female Business Education Postgraduates' Students in creative competencies possessed for Entrepreneurship ventures in South-East and South – South States.
3. There is no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female Business Education Postgraduates' Students in conflict resolution competencies possessed for Entrepreneurship ventures in South-East and South – South States.

Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive survey design. A descriptive survey design was used for this study because it was aimed at ascertaining and establishing the status quo, facts of information concerning the population. According to Nworgu (1991), survey method is appropriate, especially for seeking individual's opinions, attitudes and perceptions in their natural setting. The population of the study was 388 comprised all university Business Education postgraduates who are currently undergoing their post-graduate programme in five universities in South – East and South – South states, namely, university of Benin, Benin City, University of Uyo, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, University of Nigeria, Nsukka and Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki. Business Education postgraduates were used because they were taught entrepreneurship programmes in Business Education. Statistical information from postgraduate school records of the institutions puts the figure of registered postgraduate Business Education students of two academic sessions (2009/2010 and 2010/2011) at 388.

The sample size was 388 as purposive sampling was utilized. The data for this study were collected using a questionnaire developed and titled "Assessment of management competencies possessed by Business Education Postgraduates' Students to handle Entrepreneurship ventures in Nigeria." It consists of 36 items developed in line with the research question. The questionnaire comprised two parts - "A" and "B". Part A is for background information of the respondents and has 5 items while part B covered the research question and containing 31 items. The instrument was structured on a 4 points rating scale of Very Competent (VC) – 4 points, Competent (C) – 3 points, Fairly Competent (FC) – 2 points, Not Competent (NC) – 1 point. The face and content validity of the questionnaire was done by six experts, three from the Department of Vocational Education and one from the Department of Guidance and Counselling at Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka plus two experts from the Department of Technical and Business Education, Delta State University, Abraka. These experts were selected based on the fact that they have knowledge and experience in Entrepreneurship competencies. To establish the internal consistency of the instrument, a questionnaire was administered to twenty-five (25) Business Education postgraduates who are currently undergoing their postgraduate programme in Business Education in the study area. The data collected were subjected to Cronbach Alpha, a reliability coefficient of 0.93 was obtained. The researcher and eight research assistants briefed by the researchers personally distributed the 388 copies of the questionnaire to the respondents. Respondents completed their copies of the questionnaire and returned to the researchers and research assistants on the spot. Corrected completed copies of the questionnaire were 336 and 86.6% returned.

The arithmetic mean and standard deviations were used to analyse the data on the research questions. The z-test statistical tool was used for testing the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. Any item with a mean value between 2.5 and above was regarded as competent by the respondents while any item whose mean rating was less than 2.5 was regarded as not competent by the respondents. A null hypothesis was rejected if the calculated value of the z-test (z-cal) was greater than the table value (t-tab). On the other hand, if the calculated value (z-cal) is less than the table value (t-tab), the null hypothesis was retained.

Results

Research Question 1: What are the interpersonal competencies possessed by Business Education postgraduates' students for Entrepreneurship ventures in south-East/ South South states?

To answer research question 1, the mean and standard deviations were calculated from the frequency distribution. The result of the computation is shown in table 1 below.

Table 1: Mean rating and standard deviation of the respondents on their possessed interpersonal competencies in management.

S/N	Aspects of interpersonal management competencies	Mean	SD	Remarks
1.	Ability to organize small scale business	3.88	0.78	possessed
2.	Ability to source funds for the running of a small scale business.	3.47	0.87	possessed
3.	Ability to develop broad-based investment planning and implementation.	3.55	0.85	possessed
4.	Ability to have constant alertness to market changes and technical trend.	3.73	0.71	possessed
5.	Ability to maintain business ethics.	3.79	0.84	possessed

In Table 1, there are five (5) items of interpersonal management competencies listed. The mean and standard deviation scores of responses of the respondents showed that they are competent in all aspects. Thus, the above interpersonal management competencies are the interpersonal competencies possessed by Business Education Postgraduates' Students for Entrepreneurship ventures in South – East and South – South States.

Research Question 2: What are the creativity competencies possessed by Business Education postgraduates' students for Entrepreneurship ventures in south-East/ South South states?

Table 2: Mean rating and standard deviation of the respondents on their possessed creativity competencies in management.

S/N	Aspects of creativity management competencies	Mean	SD	Remarks
1.	Ability to plan for small or medium scale business.	3.88	0.78	possessed
2.	Ability to formulate business by – laws.	3.47	0.87	possessed
3.	Ability to supervise business effectively.	3.55	0.85	possessed
4.	Ability to apply integrating business skills.	3.73	0.71	possessed
5.	Ability to be resourceful and creative.	3.79	0.84	possessed
6.	Ability to interpret market information.	3.79	0.82	possessed
7.	Ability to identify and use market opportunities.	3.64	0.96	possessed
8.	Ability to make appropriate feedback.	3.86	0.87	possessed

In Table 2, there are eight (8) items of creativity management competencies listed. The mean and standard deviation scores of responses of the respondents showed that they are competent in all aspects. Thus, the above creativity management

competencies are the creativity competencies possessed by Business Education Postgraduates' Students for Entrepreneurship ventures in South – East and South – South States.

Research Question 3: What are the conflict resolution competencies possessed by Business Education postgraduates' students for Entrepreneurship ventures in south-East/ South South states?

Table 3: Mean rating and standard deviation of the respondents on their possessed conflict resolution competencies in management.

S/N	conflict resolution management competencies	Mean	SD	Remarks
1.	Ability to motivate self and others under One's circle of influence.	3.69	0.76	possessed
2.	Ability to handle crises whenever they occur.	3.75	0.77	possessed
3.	Ability to organize (human and material) for goal attainment.	3.78	0.81	possessed
4.	Ability to relate properly with people.	3.79	0.69	possessed
5.	Ability to initiate strict guidelines for discipline.	3.88	0.71	possessed

In Table 3 above, there are five (5) items of conflict resolution management competencies listed. The mean and standard deviation scores of responses of the respondents showed that they are competent in all aspects. Thus, the above conflict resolution management competencies are the conflict resolution competencies possessed by Business Education Postgraduates' Students for Entrepreneurship ventures in South – East and South – South States.

Null Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female Business Education Postgraduates' Students in interpersonal competencies possessed for Entrepreneurship ventures in South-East and South – South States.

Table 4: Z-score result of the difference on respondents' mean rating of their possessed interpersonal competencies based on gender

Variables	N	Mean	SD	Df	Z-cal	Z-tab	Remarks
Male	176	55.89	15.23	334	.867	1.96	NS
Female	160	51.93	16.80				

As can be seen from Table 4, the z-calculated value of 0.867 is less than z-tabulated value of 1.960 at 334 degree of freedom and 0.05 level of significance. Since the z-calculated value is less than the critical z-value, the null hypothesis is accepted.

Null Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female Business Education Postgraduates' Students in creativity competencies possessed for Entrepreneurship ventures in South-East and South – South States.

Table 5: Z-test result of the difference on respondents' mean ratings of their possessed creativity competencies based on gender

Variables	N	Mean	SD	Df	Z-cal	Z-tab	Remarks
Male	176	55.19	15.54	334	3.953	1.96	S
Female	160	53.72	15.63				

In Table 5, the z-calculated value of 3.953 is greater than z-tabulated value of 1.960 at 334 degree of freedom and 0.05 level of significance. Since the z-calculated value is greater than the critical z-value, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female Business Education Postgraduates' Students in creativity competencies possessed for Entrepreneurship ventures is rejected. This implies that there is a significant difference in the mean responses of male and female Business Education Postgraduates' Students in creativity competencies possessed for Entrepreneurship venture.

Null Hypothesis 3: There is no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female Business Education Postgraduates' Students in conflict resolution competencies possessed for Entrepreneurship ventures in South-East and South – South States.

Table 6: Z-test result of the difference on respondents' mean ratings of their possessed conflict resolution competencies based on gender

Variables	N	Mean	SD	Df	Z-cal	Z-tab	Remarks
Male	176	86.15	17.56	334	0.951	1.96	NS
Female	160	67.56	16.66				

In Table 6, the z-calculated value of 0.951 is less than z-tabulated value of 1.960 at 334 degree of freedom and 0.05 level of significance. Since the z-calculated value is less than the critical z-value, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female Business Education Postgraduates' Students in conflict resolution competencies possessed for Entrepreneurship ventures is accepted. This implies that there is no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female Business Education Postgraduates' Students in conflict resolution competencies possessed for Entrepreneurship ventures.

Discussion of Findings

The result of research question one reveals that postgraduate students in south-East/South South states possessed interpersonal competencies of Business Education for Entrepreneurship ventures. The hypothesis one reveals that there is no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female Business Education Postgraduates' Students in interpersonal competencies possessed for Entrepreneurship ventures in South-East and South – South States. The calculated z-value was less than critical z-value. Hence, the null hypothesis was retained. Also the p-value was greater than the alpha level .05. This finding is supported by Reich and Hershcovis (2011) who succinctly observe, interpersonal relationships as inevitable reality for all those working in organizations. Also, Heaphy and Dutton (2008) viewed interpersonal relationships is the product of repeated interactions and connections between and among workers usually involving awareness and contributions of the parties involved.

The result of research question two reveals that postgraduate students in south-East/South South states possessed creative competencies of Business Education for Entrepreneurship ventures. The hypothesis two reveals that there is a significant difference in the mean responses of male and female Business Education Postgraduates' Students in creative competencies possessed for Entrepreneurship ventures in South-East and South – South States. The calculated z-value was greater than critical z-value. Hence, the null hypothesis was rejected. Also the p-value was less than the alpha level .05. This finding is supported by Okpara, (2007) who affirmed that the entrepreneur is primarily concerned with developing new products, processes, or markets, the ability to bring something new into the market.

The result of research question three reveals that postgraduate students in south-East/South South states possessed conflict resolution competencies of Business Education for Entrepreneurship ventures. The hypothesis three reveals that there is no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female Business Education Postgraduates' Students in conflict resolution competencies possessed for Entrepreneurship ventures in South-East and South – South States. The calculated z-value was less than critical z-value. Hence, the null hypothesis was rejected. Also the P-value was less than the alpha level .05.

This finding is supported by Okpara, (2007) who affirmed that the entrepreneur is primarily concerned with developing new products, processes, or markets, the ability to bring something new into the market.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it is concluded that, relatively, the universities Business Education graduates used for the study have the acquired management competencies to handle entrepreneurship challenges in Nigeria. However, they need to be trained and retrained in those areas of management competencies which they are not competent.

Recommendations

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

1. Business Education graduates should undergo training on interpersonal competencies management skills.
2. University authorities should expose the Business Education students before graduation to creativity competencies management skills.
3. Materials on conflict resolution should be in stock of Business Education Department for both the undergraduates and postgraduates students to use and broaden their knowledge on conflict resolution competencies management skills.

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