



**Entrepreneurial Skills Possessed by Business Education Graduates for Small Scale Business Operations in Akwa Ibom State**

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**Abstract**

The study was necessitated by the need to enhance the performance of business education graduates in small scale business operation in Akwa Ibom State. The research question guided the study and a null hypothesis was formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance. A descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. A population of 505 registered business education graduates was studied without sampling because the size was manageable for the researcher to handle. 55-items validated questionnaire was used for data collection. The reliability of the instrument was ensured using Cronbach Alpha method and yielded reliability coefficient of .85. Data related to the research question was analyzed using mean and standard deviation while t-test the null hypothesis. The hypothesis tested showed that the business management skills were moderately possessed and enhanced them for SSB operations. Based on the findings on the study, it was recommended that government should organize seminars and conferences for graduates of Business Education to enhance their business management skills and give them grants to boost their businesses.

**Keywords:** Business Education, Entrepreneurial Skills, Graduates, Small Scale Business Operations

**Introduction**

One of the major challenges facing Nigerian society in the contemporary era is how to reduce unemployment and to promote individuals and develop economy.

Educational policies are formulated to provide relevant knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary for individuals to secure self-paid employment rather than being employed by another. Business Education according to Okwuanso (2004) is an education that makes a person or an individual to know, have skills, understand and modify attitudes so as to do what is needed to be done in business transactions. Akume (2006) defined business education as an educational programme that is aimed at teaching students the fundamentals, theories and process of business. Business education is also aimed at training individuals to become intelligent consumers of services of business with a clear understanding of the country's economy. Obviously, the crux of business education programme is to equip graduates with



relevant skills and competences so as to venture into various small scale businesses upon graduation.

Skill is taught as a quality of performance which does not depend solely upon a person's fundamental or inadequate capabilities but could be developed through training, practice and experience. Skills represent particular ways of using capabilities in relation to societal needs and demands with human being and external situation together forming a functional system. Entrepreneurial skills possessed are needed for successful operation of small scale businesses. Therefore, entrepreneurial skills according to Akpan (2012) are basic skills which are necessary to enable an individual to start a Small Scale Business (SSB).

Ademiluyi (2007) opined that entrepreneurial skills are simply business skills which individuals possess to enable them function effectively in the business environment as Small Scale Business operators. Akpotowo and Amahi (2006). pointed out that it takes special skills to succeed as Small Scale Business operation. This implies that the success of a business education graduate depends on many factors, top of which is self-motivation, business management skills, information communication technology skills, creativity skills, among others.

Business management skills are those skills that help one in the process of planning, organizing and directing organizational resources to achieve stated goals. These include; ability to plan, ability to organize and ability to handle small scale businesses, ability to source for funds for the smooth running of small scale businesses and manage business risks, ability to search for business opportunities, ability to register a business and ability to effectively supervise and coordinate human and material resources, (Okoro, 2015).

Marketing skills are the art of developing and distributing goods and services to consumers as well as businesses Akpan (2014). Marketing skill is not just limited to goods and services but extended to other areas like internet marketing or online marketing which refers to buying of goods and services through the use of web and e-mail to drive direct sales via electronics. This type of marketing is typically used in conjunction with traditional types of advertisement like radio, television, newspaper and magazines.

Creativity skill refers to the process of bringing something new into being and the ability to use imaginations to create new things. It also involves other mental process of an individual or group of people; for example, using problem solving techniques to solve business challenges or problems Akpomi (2008). Creativity brings awareness of what was previously hidden and points to new term of innovation.

However, graduates of business education seem to be failing in the achievement of their businesses as a result of lack of needed entrepreneurial skills. Many crumbled shortly after being floated due to the failure of their owners to utilize appropriate skills possessed for business success; as a result, failure follows instead of success. Small scale operators must be organized, honest to take good decisions and develop all the entrepreneurial skills possessed for business success.

Gender can be an influencing factor to the successful operation of Small Scale Business (SSB) in Akwa Ibom State. This is because Adeshina (2007) had observed that female entrepreneurs are likely to survive than their male counterparts due to unequal economic activities and inequalities of access to productive resources.



Owing to the aforementioned, there is need for individuals to think of ways to become self-reliant and self-employed rather than waiting for white collar jobs.

### **Statement of the Problem**

There is high failure rate in small scale business operations in Akwa Ibom State. The situation is retarding economic and social development in the state. Many business education graduates who are the small scale entrepreneurs start their business without any idea of how much money will be required for such business and consequently, they give up too quickly owing to inadequate knowledge of demands and risks of such operations. It is against this background that the study sought to determine the entrepreneurial skills possessed by business education graduates for small scale business operations in Akwa Ibom State.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The main purpose of this study is to determine the entrepreneurial skills possessed by business education graduates for small scale business operations in Akwa Ibom State.

### **Significance of the Study**

The findings of this study would be beneficial to different persons and group of persons such as; business education students and graduates, business operators and prospective small scale business operators as it will help them to have more interest in entrepreneurial skills possessed and also reduce the incident of business failure. Future researchers will also benefit from the findings of this study as it would serve as a veritable source of information and relevant materials in their research activities.

### **Research Question**

One Research Question guided the study:

To what extent does a business education graduate possess business management skills for small scale business operations in Akwa Ibom State?

### **Null Hypothesis**

H<sub>01</sub> There is no significant difference in the mean rating of male and female respondents on the extent they possess business management skills for small scale business operation in Akwa Ibom State.

### **Methodology**

The design adopted in this study was descriptive survey. The study was carried out in Akwa Ibom State. A descriptive survey design was used for this study because the study is aimed at ascertaining and establishing the status, facts and pieces of information concerning the population. According to Nworgu (2015), a survey research design is one which aims at collecting data on and describing in a systematic manner the characteristics and facts about a given population. The researchers considers this design appropriate for this study since it is a collected data from business education graduates in order to explore the extent they possess entrepreneurial skills for small scale business operation for success.



The population of the study consisted of 505 registered business education graduates operating small scale businesses in Uyo senatorial district of Akwa Ibom State. Information gathered from ministry of commerce and industry in 2016 the population distribution of business education graduates who operates small scale business enterprise. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire “Entrepreneurial Skills Possessed by Business Education Graduates for Small Scale Business Operation (QBESBO)”. The questionnaire contains 10 items on entrepreneurial skills possessed by business education graduates for small scale business operation. The instrument was structured on a 5 point rating scale of; Very Highly Possessed (VHP), Highly Possessed (HP), Moderately Possessed (MP), Lowly Possessed (LP) and Very Lowly Possessed (VLP). The face validity of the instrument was established using two experts in business education from Nnamdi Azikiwe University and one expert from Vocational Education department, University of Uyo.

To ascertain the internal consistency of the data instrument, the researchers conducted a trial test whereby copies of the instrument were administered to 30 registered business education graduates in Ikot Ekpene senatorial district operating small scale business who were not part of the population of the study. The data were analyzed using Cronbach Alpha method to determine its degree of reliability. The analysis yielded an overall value of 0.85 indicating a high reliability coefficient according to Nworgu. Copies of the questionnaire were administered on the respondents with the help of three research assistants who were briefed on the procedure for administering and collecting the instrument. A total of five hundred and five copies of questionnaire were distributed to the respondents and 497 (representing 98%) were filled and retrieved and used for data analysis. Three copies of the questionnaire were misplaced by respondents which represent (2%).

Data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) to answer the research questions and standard deviation was used to determine the closeness of the respondents’ mean rating with Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS).

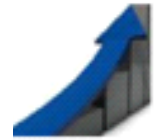
Since the population of the study was not too large but small and manageable, the researcher decided to use all the identified registered business education graduates operating small scale businesses in Uyo senatorial district of Akwa Ibom State.

The null hypotheses were tested with related t-test statistics. Decisions on the questionnaire, items and research questions were based on the items and cluster mean relative to the real limits of numbers as shown below:

<b>Responses</b>	<b>Rating Scale</b>	<b>Real Limit Numbers</b>
Very Highly Possessed	5	4.50 – 5.00
Highly Possessed	4	3.50 – 4.49
Moderately Possessed	3	2.50 – 3.49
Lowly Possessed	2	1.50 – 2.49
Very Lowly Possessed	1	0.50 – 1.49

A null hypothesis was rejected where the calculated t-value was less than the table t-value; the null hypothesis was not rejected.

## **Result**

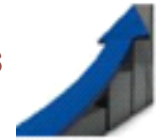


**Research Question1:** To what extent does business education graduate possess business management skills for small scale business operation in Akwa Ibom State?

**Table 1:** Respondents’ mean on possessed business management skills for small scale business operation in Akwa Ibom State

S/N	Items on Business Management Skills Ability to	$\bar{X}$	SD	Decision
1.	Develop skills for effective growth and development of the business	3.30	.46	Moderately Possessed
2.	Interpret market information	3.20	.40	Moderately Possessed
3.	Make a choice for the business	3.70	.46	Highly Possessed
4.	Keep cordially relationship with the customers	3.70	.46	Highly Possessed
5.	Keep good record procedures	3.54	.53	Highly Possessed
6.	Coordinate business activities	3.24	.40	Moderately Possessed
7.	Determine causes of business failures	3.20	.40	Moderately Possessed
8.	Control the affairs of the establishment	3.50	.50	Highly Possessed
9.	Make impact on management policy	3.56	.53	Moderately Possessed
10.	Implement planned programme of actions	3.50	.50	Highly Possessed
11.	Approve employee performance to make decision	3.50	.50	Moderately Possessed
12.	Manage the business effectively and prioritizing business activities	3.60	.51	Highly Possessed
13.	Combine management plans	3.40	.49	Moderately Possessed
14.	Knowledge of business logistics and policies	3.60	.59	Highly Possessed
15.	Management business time effectively	3.43	.52	Moderately Possessed
<b>Cluster Mean</b>		<b>3.44</b>		Moderately Possessed

Table 1 shows that eight out of the 15 business management skills have mean ratings between 3.50 and 3.70. This indicates that business education graduates who operate small scale business in Akwa Ibom State highly possess them. The remaining seven skills have mean ratings ranging between 3.20 and 3.43 which show that the respondents moderately possess them. The cluster means of 3.44 showed that business education graduates operating small scale business in Akwa Ibom State moderately possess business management skills. The standard deviation of 0.40 to 0.53 is within the same range and indicates that the respondents were not wide apart in their mean rating. The cluster mean of 3.44 showed that the business education graduates operating small scale businesses in Akwa Ibom State moderately possess business management skills.



**Null Hypothesis 1:** There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female respondents on the extent they possess business management skills for small scale business in Akwa Ibom State.

**Table 2:** Related t-test of male and female respondents' mean ratings on the extent they possess business management skills for small scale business.

Gender	N	X	SD	a	df	t-cal	t-crit	Decision
Male	229	4.10	.11	0.05	495	0.93	1.96	Not Significant
Female	276	4.16	.14					

Table 2 shows that the calculated t-value of 0.93 was less than the critical value of 1.96 at 495 degree of freedom and at 0.05 level of significance. This means that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings on male and female respondents; the extent they possess business management skills for small scale business operation in Akwa Ibom State. Therefore, the hypothesis was accepted.

### Discussion of Findings

Findings of the study revealed that business education graduates in Akwa Ibom State moderately possessed business management skills for small scale business operations. The findings of this study is in line with the position of Ekpenyong and Ojo (2008) who noted that business education graduates are expected to possess adequate management skills at a high level in order to function effectively in their businesses. Obereh (2011) had opined that possession of business managements will facilitate effective job performance in the operation in the area of receiving, analyzing and processing of information. Obereh's opinion agreed with Bernard (2011) who stated that good business management skills play major roles in the process of achieving the set goals of an organization. The fact that business education graduates possess business management skills at moderate level means that they are not well equipped.

Furthermore, the test of null hypothesis revealed that there was no significant difference in the mean rating of male and female respondents on the extent they possess business management skills. This was in support with Okoro (2015) who stated that business education graduates are competent in ability to planning, organizing, sourcing funds for the small scale business irrespective of gender. Both male and female respondents are not lacking behind in business management skills. It was further found that business location has no significant influence on the level of business management skills possessed by the respondents. This was in agreement with Ediagbonya (2013) who held that business education graduates are competent in creating jobs, rescuing themselves from unemployment and poverty and thereby impact upon developing skills, self-esteem and self-sufficiency irrespective of their location in the state.

### Implication of the Study

The findings of this study have some educational implications for business education institutions offering business education programmes and their students. Graduates of business education are expected to perform effectively in paid or self-employment as well as relevant



entrepreneurial skills such as employers of labor. Therefore, business management skills are very vital for their successful business operations.

### **Conclusion**

The findings of this study revealed that business management skills identified were rated to be moderately possessed and are not properly handled by business educators of business education graduates. The curriculum planners of the programme should design appropriate training programmes that would help in preparing business education students to attain business management skills.

The effective use of these entrepreneurial skills would reduce the rate of small scale business failures in Akwa Ibom State.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this study, it was recommended that:

1. The administrators of business education programme should collaborate with successful entrepreneurs to map out training programmes that will equip students/graduates with the pre-requisite skills through conferences, seminars and workshops.
2. Government at all levels should fund the training and retraining of business education graduates in entrepreneurship programmes to enhance their huge success in small scale business operations.

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