

Assessment of Management Competencies Possessed by Postgraduate University Business Education Students to Handle Entrepreneurship Business Challenges in Nigeria

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Abstract

University Business Education graduates, by the nature of their programme, ought to possess relevant management competencies for successful entrepreneurship but casual observation and empirical reports indicate that they are not doing well in this aspect. Therefore, this study assessed the management competencies possessed by the university postgraduate Business Education students to handle entrepreneurship business challenges in Nigeria. One research question and five hypotheses guided the study. Descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. The population, also used as the sample, consisted of 388 Business Education graduates 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 0.05 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 conferences and workshops on how to manage small scale businesses.

Keywords: Assessment, management competencies, possessed, university Business Education graduates, handle business challenges, Nigeria.

1. Introduction

Change has always been a constant factor in any human endeavour which cannot take place unless people bring change in the face of the prevailing circumstances and environment. There must be revolutionary changes in institutions (both formal and non-formal) service delivery patterns, what teachers teach, patterns of teaching, and how students learn with the aims of identifying citizens potentials, equipping them with relevant skills and knowledge and eradicate poverty amongst the populace (Okolocha, Ile & Ezenyilimba, 2012). Education according to the UNESCO (2003) should be seen as a powerful catalyst for change, as a tool for poverty eradication, as it provides the vision to see clearly what is involved in poverty eradication, the voice to say what is required, and the skills and energy to take action in order to eradicate poverty. 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 imbibe the culture of challenging their potentials practically. Aremu (2010) attributed the unemployment problem of Nigeria university graduates to lack of saleable skills. This situation therefore calls for knowledge realignment. In the same vein, Isineyi (2008) observed that the needs of the students were not effectively reflected in the content of the educational system as most of these graduates do not possess skills that can make them to be independent and self-reliant in the face of the current prevailing hardship and unemployment rate in the country. In the non-formal sector however, appropriate machinery were also not put in place by the government to facilitate the acquisition of the right knowledge and skills to deal with innovations, services, products, ideas and best practices that drive the wheel of progress for development and poverty eradication. Knowledge, skills and resourcefulness of people are critical to sustaining economic and social development activities in a knowledge based society.

Effective human resources development can enhance skill acquisition and reduce unemployment. Mankind is yelling for human resources development, because it is the gateway to globalization, eradication of poverty, sickness, terrorism and sustenance of the environment. No doubt that accumulation of individual resource development leads to national development. Ukeje (1986) noted that human resource development is the process of building knowledge, skills, attitudes, working ability and innate capacities of the society. Peretomode & Peretomode (2005) noted that human resource management focuses on the whole process of planning, finding, building, coordinating, utilizing work-force and handling the formal systems for the management of people within the organization until and after their retirement. In the society, the African child is faced with myriads of problems such as unemployment, disease, poverty, tendencies and education to relieve himself or herself from the shackles of disease and poverty among others (Onwuka & Obidike, 2012). Unemployment scourge is a common phenomenon which every nation strives to eradicate, hence

educational policies are formulated to provide relevant knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary for individuals to secure self-paid employment rather than being employed by other persons. It is not surprising that the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2009) emphasized the acquisition of appropriate skills, abilities and competencies, (both mental and physical) as equipment for the individuals to live in and contribute significantly to the development of the society. Hence, the introduction of Business Education into university is to help to solve unemployment problem in Nigeria by creating jobs for the recipient to be self-employed.

Uzo-Okonkwo (2007) defined Business Education as that aspect of the total educational programme that provides 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. Esene (2007) stated that Business Education represents a broad and diverse discipline that is included in all types of educational delivery systems, elementary, secondary and post-secondary. Business Education can be offered at any level; at secondary and tertiary institutions such as colleges of education and universities. Business Education includes education for office occupation, distribution and marketing occupations, business teaching, business administration, and economic understanding. Okoro (2009) stated that Business Education means education for and about business, or training in business skills and competencies required for use in business offices, clerical occupations and business policy analysis. It is a training that gives an occupational identity. Esene (2007) observed that Business Education as that area of education process which concerns itself with vocational and professional preparation for a career which is important for every citizen and consumer in order that he may better understand and use his business and economic surroundings. Business Education programme at university level, courses in accounting, management, marketing and office technology and management are offered. The students are expected to have possessed to relevant skills and competencies in their areas of specialization after graduation. Business Education in management option, are expected to have wide knowledge of how to handle business operation.

Management refers to a group of people in organization that formulate policies to ensure that the organization survives. They think of management team as a group of individuals at the helm of affairs in an organization. However, management is also seen as a process demanding the performance of specific functions (Eshenake, 2007). Nwachukwu (2005) defined management as the art of getting things done through the efforts of other people. Management is the process of planning, organizing and directing organizational resources to achieve organizational goal. Osuala (2000) also defined management as the process of achieving organization goals through the co-ordinated performance of five specific functions of planning, organization, staffing, directing and controlling. Management, therefore, is a process of doing things in an organization is, basically, the combination and utilization of available human, financial and material resources towards the achievement of the organizational objectives (Eshenake, 2007). As a group of people, management refers to all those at top levels in organizations who plan, guide and control the activities of members at the lower levels. They are those in organizations who do things through and with other people. Business Education graduates are expected to possess a wide knowledge of management skills which include ability to plan, organize, and handle small and medium scale businesses, source funds for the smooth running of a small business, ability to start a new business, searching for business opportunities, registering a business, managing business risk, effectively supervise and coordinate human and material resources. Other relevant management skills include ability to develop broad-based investment planning and implementation, time management skills and apply integrating business skills. There is hardly any sphere of life where the knowledge of management is not required. In order for Business Education graduates to successfully run entrepreneurship ventures, they need the following accounting skills identified by Ekwue and Udoye (2008) namely; ability to keep and control stocks, avoid unplanned expenditure, determine profit of a particular business, find out sources of capital to start business and detect fraud among others. Marketing competencies expected of Business Education graduates, according to Esene (2009), are ability to capture and retain the attention of customers, promote and sell the organisation's products, analyse demand and sell the organisation's products, as well as ability to carry out effective marketing and information research. Other marketing skills are knowledge of advertising, pricing and warehousing in order to avoid excess supply of products and so on.

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. Entrepreneurship can, therefore, be seen as willingness and ability to seek out an investment opportunity, establish an enterprise based on this and run it successfully. According to Udeh (1999), entrepreneurship consists of generating business ideas, identifying investment opportunities, making decisions towards exploiting the opportunities, formulating organizational objectives, conducting market research and surveys, combining service resources, establishing an enterprise, starting the business, distributing and promoting the organization's products and services; organizing the human and material resources for the

attainment of the objectives of the enterprise, as well as bearing risks and uncertainties, innovations and diversifications.

Business Education graduates are expected to possess adequate knowledge and skills in management. Eshenake identified the following managerial competencies as needed for entrepreneurial success:

- Human skill – This refer to the ability of the manger to handle personal relationships. Human skills are needed by top management staff on how to create good relations with and between staff and clients of their organizations for organizational survival and success.
- Technical skills – The manger should know the methods, processes and techniques required in the performance of a particular activity. These skills are needed of management levels.
- Conceptual skills – The manger should be able to see relationship between departments and units within the organization and relationships between the organization and the environment. These skills are needed by top management staff.

Ademiluyi (2007) identified management competencies needed for effective entrepreneurship as perceived by fresh graduates to include planning skills, organizing skills, directing skills, controlling skills, motivating skills, staffing skills, leading skills, office management skills, coordinating and good knowledge of commerce. In the same vein, Ekpenyong and Ojo (2008) identified the following management skills as needed by Business Education graduates for entrepreneurial success.

- Ability to plan, organize and manage small scale or medium scale business.
- Ability to source for funds for the running of a small scale business
- Ability to develop skills of keeping accounting records of small-scale business
- Ability to supervise and coordinate of both human and material resources
- Ability to develop broad-based investment planning and implementation skills
- Ability apply integrating business skills
- Ability to have constant alertness to market changes and technical trend
- Ability to maintain business ethics
- Ability to interpret market information
- Time management skills
- Ability to be resourceful and creative
- Ability to redefine risk as opportunities to make use of the expertise
- Ability to motivate self and others under one's circle of influence
- Ability to develop skills for effective utilization of the project for the growth and development of the firm.
- Ability to develop a reputation for being the kind of person who is always looking for ways to do things better and faster.
- Ability to handle crises whenever it occurs.

Gibson (2011) also identified the following management competencies expected of Business Education graduates

- Ability to identify and use market opportunities
- Ability to set appropriate goals
- Ability to plan effectively for goal attainment
- Ability to organize resources (human and material) for goal attainment
- Ability to implement plans for goal attainment
- Ability to evaluate all activities and operations in the process of goal attainment
- Ability to make appropriate feed back
- Ability to establish and maintain appropriate open channels for communications
- Ability to relate properly with people
- Ability to understand business law
- Ability to advertise firms product effectively
- Ability to understand and use banking facilities

Management competencies are essential to the success of every organization. Management influences the life of all members of an organized society (Eshenake, 2007). The knowledge of managerial skills will provide the following:

- A greater knowledge of and insight into the responsibilities of managing people.
- A better understanding of the problems of operating a business organization
- An opportunity to learn the skills essential to effective managerial decision making
- An understanding of basic principles of management
- An increased knowledge about production and operations of management techniques
- The knowledge to identify and cope with internal and external forces in the environment that affect performance
- The skills and attitude to continue in professional development.

2. Statement of the Problem

University Business Education graduates by their education and training ought to possess the relevant competencies in management competencies that will 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. Furthermore, Okwuanaso (2004) indicated that the expectations for which the National Policy on Education introduced business education in Nigerian school system have not been fully met. Unfortunately, Akume (2006) research findings revealed that many Business Education graduates that set their businesses come out with high rate of failure. He further stated that in a year about 50% of them survived, in two years about 18% of them survived while in 3years many of the businesses have liquidated. This uncertainty of success among Business Education in running their businesses is a major concern to prospective entrepreneurs. There are doubts about the management competencies possessed by Business Education graduates. The problem of the study therefore, to what extent do Business Education graduates possess relevant competencies in management?

3. Purpose of the Study

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

4. Research Question

The following research question was raised to guide the study:

To what extent do Business Education graduates possess relevant competencies in management?

5. Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

1. There is no significant difference between male and female university Business Education graduates in the mean ratings of their possessed competencies in management.
2. There is no significant difference between south east and south west university Business Education graduates in the mean ratings of their possessed competencies in management.
3. There is no significant difference between B.Sc. and M.Ed university Business Education graduates in the mean ratings of their possessed competencies in management.
4. There is no significant difference between federal and state universities Business Education graduates in the mean ratings of their possessed competencies in management.
5. There is no significant difference between full-time and part-time university Business Education graduates in the mean ratings of their possessed competencies in management.

6. Method

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 comprised all university Business Education graduates who are currently undergoing their post-graduate programme in five universities in the area of study, namely, university of Benin, Benin City, University of Uyo, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, University of Nigeria, Nsukka and Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki. Business Education graduates who are currently undergoing postgraduate programmes in Business Education were chosen for the study due to the fact that they could easily be contacted by the researcher. 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 data for this study were collected using a questionnaire developed and titled "Assessment of management competencies possessed by University Postgraduate Business Education Students to handle Entrepreneurship Business Challenges 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 point 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 test construction. The title, purpose of the study, research questions and hypotheses were presented to them with a draft copy of the instrument and they were requested to thoroughly scrutinize the instrument for clarity and relevance of the items. To establish the internal consistency of the instrument, a questionnaire was administered to twenty-five (25) Business Education graduates who are currently undergoing their postgraduate programme in Business

Education at Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye in Ogun State in south west Nigeria. The data collected were subjected to Cronbach alpha, a reliability coefficient of 0.93 was obtained. The researcher and eight research assistants trained by the researcher personally distributed the 388 copies of the questionnaire to the respondents. Some respondents completed their copies of the questionnaire and returned to the researcher and research assistants on the spot. In cases where on-the-spot completion and retrieval were not possible, the researcher and research assistants visited the institutions at later times as agreed with the concerned respondents to collect the completed copies of the questionnaire. The rate of return stood at 336, out of 388 (86.6%).

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.

7. Results

Research Question 1

To what extent do Business Education graduates possess relevant competencies in management?

To answer research question 2, the mean and standard deviations were calculated from the frequency distribution. The result of the computation is shown in table below.

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

S/N	Aspects of Management Competencies	Mean	SD	Remarks
1	Ability to plan for small scale or medium scale business	2.87	0.88	Competent
2	Ability to organize small scale business	2.88	0.87	Competent
3	Ability to source funds for the running of a small scale business	2.74	0.78	Competent
4	Ability to develop skills of keeping accounting records of small-scale business	2.80	0.86	Competent
5	Ability to formulate business by-laws	2.62	0.78	Competent
6	Knowledge of business registration	2.72	0.78	Competent
7	Ability to develop broad-based investment planning and implementation skills	2.55	0.82	Competent
8	Ability to supervise business effectively	2.71	0.78	Competent
9	Ability to apply integrating business skills	2.56	0.83	Competent
10	Ability to have constant alertness to market changes and technical trend	2.70	0.81	Competent
11	Ability to maintain business ethnics	2.79	0.80	Competent
12	Ability to interpret market information	2.79	0.80	Competent
13	Ability to manage time effectively	2.96	0.83	Competent
14	Ability to be resourceful and creative	2.84	0.77	Competent
15	Ability to redefine risk as opportunities to make use of the expertise	2.69	0.78	Competent
16	Ability to motivate self and others under one's circle of influence	2.81	0.80	Competent
17	Ability to develop skills for effective utilization of the project for the growth and development of the firm	2.85	0.85	Competent
18	Ability to handle crises whenever they occur	2.78	0.79	Competent
19	Ability to manage customers	2.97	0.82	Competent
20	Ability to identify and use market opportunities	2.46	0.96	Not competent
21	Ability set appropriate goals	2.70	0.79	Competent
22	Ability to plan effectively for goal attainment	2.86	0.87	Competent
23	Ability to organize resources (human and material) for goal attainment	2.69	0.71	Competent
24	Ability to implement plans for goal attainment	2.54	0.75	Competent
25	Ability to make appropriate feed back	2.68	0.87	Competent
26	Ability to handle product effectively	2.89	0.70	Competent
27	Ability to relate properly with people	2.79	0.69	Competent
28	Ability to understand business law	2.60	0.85	Competent
29	Ability to initiate strict guidelines for discipline	2.78	0.71	Competent
30	Ability to express work value through classroom instruction	2.48	0.92	Not Competent
31	Ability to encourage self-esteem in students	2.91	0.89	Competent
Grand Mean/S.D =		2.77	0.81	Competent

In Table 1, there are thirty-three (33) items of management competencies listed. The mean scores of responses of the respondents showed that they are competent in 31 aspects except ability to identify and use market opportunities and ability to express work value through classroom instruction.

Hypothesis 1

There is no significant difference between male and female university Business Education graduates in the mean ratings of their possessed competencies in management.

Table 2: Z-test result of the difference on respondents' mean rating of their possessed management competencies based on gender.

Variables	N	Mean	SD	Df	z-cal	z-tab	Remarks
Male	176	52.98	12.32	334	0.759	1.96	NS
Female	160	51.93	13.08				

As can be seen from the table, the z-calculated value of 0.759 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.

Hypothesis 2

There is no significant difference between south east and south west university Business Education graduates in the mean rating of their possessed competencies in management.

Table 3: Z-test result of the difference on respondents' mean ratings of their possessed management competencies based on location

Variables	N	Mean	SD	Df	z-cal	z-tab	Remarks
South East	204	53.91	12.54	334	2.593	1.960	Sig
South South	132	50.27	12.63				

As can be seen from the table, the z-calculated value of 2.593 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 is rejected.

Hypothesis 3

There is no significant difference between B.Sc. and M.Ed university Business Education graduates in the mean ratings of their possessed competencies in management.

Table 4: Z-test result of the difference on respondents' mean ratings of their possessed management competencies based on qualification

Variables	N	Mean	SD	Df	z-cal	z-tab	Remarks
B.Sc.	283	82.51	14.65	334	0.815	1.960	NS
M.Ed	53	60.65	13.66				

As can be seen from the table, the z-calculated value of 0.815 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.

Hypothesis 4

There is no significant difference between federal and state universities Business Education graduates in the mean ratings of their possessed competencies in management.

Table 5: Z-test result of the difference on respondents' mean ratings of their possessed management competencies based on university type

Variables	N	Mean	SD	Df	z-cal	z-tab	Remarks
Federal	321	72.32	13.60	334	0.914	1.960	NS
State	15	69.30	14.30				

As can be seen from the table, the z-calculated value of 0.914 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.

Hypothesis 5

There is no significant difference between full-time and part-time university Business Education graduates in the mean ratings of their possessed competencies in management.

Table 6: Z-test result of the difference on respondents' mean ratings of their possessed management based on mode of study

Variables	N	Mean	SD	Df	z-cal	z-tab	Remarks
Full-time	300	73.12	12.21	334	1.10	1.960	NS
Part-time	36	71.22	11.18				

As can be seen from the table, the z-calculated value of 1.10 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.

8. Discussion

The finding of the study was that university Business Education graduates are competent in all aspects of management relative to entrepreneurial challenges as indicated by the respondents. Ability to manage customers was ranked highest, followed by ability to manage time effectively, ability to organize small scale business, ability to plan for small scale or medium scale business, ability to develop skills for effective utilization of the project for the growth and development of the firm. In agreement with this, Eshenake (2007) stated that management is a process of doing things in an organization and the process is basically the combination and utilization of resources toward the achievement of the organization objectives. The respondents are competent in ability to be resourceful and creative, ability to motivate self and others under one's circle of influence, ability to develop skills of keeping accounting records of small scale business, ability to develop business ethics and ability to interpret market information.

University Business Education graduates are also competent in ability to handle crises whenever they occur, ability to source funds for the running of a business, knowledge of business registration, ability to supervise business effectively, ability to have constant alertness to market changes and technical trends, ability to redefine risk as opportunities to make use of expertise, ability to formulate business, policy ability to apply integrating business skills, and ability to develop broad-based investment planning and implementation skills. In agreement to this, Ekpenyong and Ojo (2008) have earlier identified the following management skills as perceived by business educators which are needed for entrepreneurial success. Ability to plan, organize and manage small scale or medium scale business, ability to source for funds for the running of a small scale business, ability to develop skills of keeping accounting records of small-scale business, ability set appropriate goals, ability to plan effectively for goal attainment, ability to organize resources (human and material) for goal attainment, ability to implement plans for goal attainment, ability to make appropriate feedback, ability to handle product effectively, ability to relate properly with people ability understand business laws, acquiring skills for effective supervision and coordination of both human and material resources. Business Education graduates are able to develop broad-based investment planning and implementation skills, apply integrating business skills, have constant alertness to market changes and technical trend and maintain business ethics. This study also reveals that Business Education graduates are able to interpret market information, time management skills, resourceful and creative, redefine risk as opportunities to make use of the expertise and motivate self and others under one's circle of influence. This study is consistent with that of Ademiluyi (2007), which also identified the above management competencies. The result of the hypotheses revealed that there was no significant difference between male and female university Business Education graduates in the mean ratings of their possessed competencies in management, there was significant difference between south east and south west university Business Education graduates in the mean ratings of their possessed competencies in management, there is no significant difference between B.Sc. and M.Ed university Business Education graduates in the mean ratings of their possessed competencies in management, there was no significant difference between federal and state universities Business Education graduates in the mean ratings of their possessed competencies in management and there was no significant difference between full-time and part-time university Business Education graduates in the mean ratings of their possessed competencies in management.

9. Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it is concluded that, relatively, the universities Business Education graduates used for the study have the required 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.

10. Recommendations

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

1. Business Education graduates should undergo conferences and workshops on how to manage small scale businesses.
2. University authorities should expose the Business Education students before graduation to conferences and workshops in management.
3. Business Education department should be equipped by university authorities with management textbooks and organization charts.

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