

Managerial and Communication Competencies Required by Business Education Students for Establishing Small Scale Ventures in Rivers State

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ABSTRACT

The study sought to assess the managerial and communication competencies required by business education students for establishing small scale ventures in Rivers State. The study adopted descriptive survey research design. The population of the study consisted of 729 final year business education students. The sample size of the study consisted of 248 final year business education students drawn from three tertiary institutions in Rivers State. The instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled "Entrepreneurship Competencies Required by Business Education Students for Establishing Small Scale Ventures Questionnaire (ECRBESESSVQ). Mean and standard deviations were used to answer the research questions while Z-test was used to test the hypotheses at the 0.05 level of significance level. From the study it was concluded that managerial competencies and communication competencies are veritable tools through which students and other individuals can utilize to establish businesses, especially small scale ventures. One of the recommendations made from the study is that undergraduate business education students should be inculcated with managerial competencies such as the ability to carry out feasibility studies, prepare policies, manage human and material resources, etc., as these will aid them to establish and run businesses successfully.

KEYWORDS: Managerial Competencies, Communication Competencies, Small Scale Ventures and Rivers State.

Introduction

Entrepreneurship is seen as the ability and readiness to develop, organize and run a business enterprise, along with any of its uncertainties in order to make a profit. The most prominent example of entrepreneurship is the starting of new businesses. Onyije and Ajie (2021) see entrepreneurship as the organization, mobilization and direction of labour, land and capital for the purpose of production. Entrepreneurship is therefore a dynamic and complex factor of production which involves the ability to recognize a business opportunity and mobilize both human and material resources to exploit the identified opportunity. In other discipline like economics, entrepreneurship is connected with land, labour, natural resources and capital can generate a profit. The entrepreneurial vision is defined by discovery and risk-taking and is an indispensable part of a nation's capacity to succeed in an ever-changing and more competitive global marketplace.

Business Education is widely given high scores on the programs of many governments. Such governments depend on the development of entrepreneurship through Business Education as the major source for their economic prosperity, growth and development. It is a

kind of new concept which signifies not only quality education but also pay attention to the development of an individual practical ability and competency of students. It is also described as a new method of teaching that promotes students innovative spirit, skills and attitudes which consequently make them after graduation to suitable career and become professional business creator, European Commission (2003) concluded.

A small scale venture is a business in which its owners influence the entire decision-making process and the business has relatively small market share and low capital requirements for operation. A small scale venture can also be described as a small business in which the manager personally performs all the functions of the management. The American small business act of 1953 as cited in James (2015) defined small scale ventures as a business which is independently owned and operated and is not dominant in its field of operation.

Statement of Problem

Most small scale ventures in Nigeria die within their first five years of existence, as smaller percentage goes into extinction between the sixth and tenth year while only about five to ten percent survive, thrive and grow to maturity (Aremu, 2011). The mismatch between the job market and the inability of students to develop employability skills is in addition to the scarcity of opportunities required to absorb the large number of graduates that enter the labour market yearly. This has piled pressure on the call for the development of entrepreneurship competency among students at the tertiary education level so that, at the end of their education, students in the business education degree stream can establish a business venture and become employers and entrepreneurs rather than unemployed graduates. Clearly, the general business problem among most entrepreneurs is that they embark on business initiatives without the necessary entrepreneurship competencies, resulting in a lack of knowledge, deficiencies in decision-making processes, and an inability to deal with business-related obstacles, forcing these individuals to close their businesses.

Objective of the Study

The study sought to determine:

1. the extent to which managerial competencies are required by business education students for establishing small scale ventures in Rivers State.
2. the extent to which communication competencies are required by business education students for establishing small scale ventures in Rivers State.

Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated to guide the study:

1. to what extent are managerial competencies required by business education students for establishing of small scale ventures in Rivers State?
2. to what extent are communication competencies required by business education students for establishing of small scale ventures in Rivers State?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated and tested at .05 level of significance:

1. there is no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female business education students on extent managerial competencies are required for establishing small scale ventures in Rivers State.
2. there is no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female business education students on extent communication competencies are required for establishing small scale ventures in Rivers State.

Entrepreneurship Competencies

Entrepreneurship is the ability and readiness to develop, organize and run a business enterprise, along with any of its uncertainties in order to make a profit. The most prominent example of entrepreneurship is the starting of new businesses. In economics, entrepreneurship connected with land, labour, natural resources and capital can generate a profit. The entrepreneurial vision is defined by discovery and risk-taking and is an indispensable part of a nation's capacity to succeed in an ever-changing and more competitive global marketplace (Lau & Chan, 2010).

The entrepreneur is defined as someone who has the ability and desire to establish, administer and succeed in a startup venture along with risk entitled to it, to make profits. The best example of entrepreneurship is the starting of a new business venture. The entrepreneurs are often known as a source of new ideas or innovators, and bring new ideas in the market by replacing old with a new invention. It can be classified into small or home business to multinational companies.

Entrepreneurship competencies are defined as underlying characteristics possessed by a person, which result in new venture creation. These characteristics include generic and specific knowledge, motives, traits, self-images, social roles, and skills that may or may not be known to the person. That is, these characteristics may be even unconscious attributes of an individual. Some of these competencies are innate while others are acquired in the process of learning and training and development. Entrepreneurship competencies can be defined as underlying characteristics such as generic and specific knowledge, motives, traits, self-images, social roles, and skills that result in venture birth, survival, and/or growth. Bird as cited in Lau and Chan (2010), total ability of the entrepreneur to perform this role successfully. Several studies have found positive relationship between existences of competencies and venture performance.

Small Scale Ventures

A small scale venture is a business that is not large, in terms of its size, scope of operation, financial involvement and the workforce involved. Most small scale enterprises are owned by one entrepreneur. Sometimes a small scale enterprise is said to be a firm that is independently owned and operated and which is not dominant in its field of operation. In general, we should recognize that a small scale business must have few employees, limited capital investment and small scale operation (Nicholas, 2017). As far as the development of the rural and urban areas in Nigeria is concerned, the role of small scale enterprises cannot be under-estimated. The present administration realizes the importance of these small scale ventures hence the various policies being put in place to encourage their growth. The small scale businesses have the potentiality to reduce the rate of unemployment in Nigeria and thus to contribute to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and economic growth of the nation

(Oshagbemi, 2013). The industrialized nations which have attained technological advancement today owe their present position to the establishment of small scale industries in the past. The small scale businesses served as pivot for technological take off and self-reliance.

In the commercial world, there are numerous kinds of business undertakings. This varies from private enterprises to public corporations. A small scale enterprise is defined as a business which is independent, small in size and often localized. Most small scale businesses are operated by private individuals or group of individuals (Onuoha, 2014). Due to the positive contribution of small scale businesses to the economic development of the nation, there is the increased need for the government to be seriously involved in the support and encouragement of the small scale ventures to enable them realize their full potentials to the benefit of the whole nation.

Generally speaking, the definition of small scale business varies from country to country, from industry to industry and from one financial institution to another. If project cost is used as the criteria for measuring the size of a business, price inflation may render the definition meaningless over time. If the number of employees engaged in a business forms the yardstick for measurement, it may not be realistic bearing in mind that some firms are capital intensive needing only very few employees. Other firms are labour intensive employing large number of people but utilizing only small capital fund (Osadi, 2017). The Federal Ministry of Industries (2001) defined a small scale enterprise as an enterprise whose total cost including working capital but excluding cost of land, does not fall below One Million Naira and does not exceed Forty Million Naira and having number of employees between 11 to 35 workers. The Committee for Economic Development in the United States of America considered a business to be small when, at least, two of the following features prevail: The person managing the business is the owner Capital is provided by the individual owner(s) of the business The area of operation is local The size of the business within the industry is small when compared with the bigger units in its field. The World Bank defined small scale enterprise as any on-going concern whose total project cost is not more than N30,000.00. Today this definition has lost its relevance, at least in Nigeria, due to the effect of inflation.

Managerial Competencies

Managerial competencies are the skills, habits, motives, knowledge and attitudes necessary to successfully manage people. When developed, management competencies promote better leadership and contribute to business success. Management competencies are categorized as human capital which is broadly defined as the knowledge and skills that contribute to workplace productivity. The human assets needed for managerial competency are necessary for a productive workforce. Below are some core management competencies, interpersonal communication, motivating others, written communication, honesty/integrity, problem solving, developing others, vision/planning, creativity/innovation, conflict resolution, delegation valuing diversity etc.

Managerial competencies have been identified as key success indicators of organisations that are used to accomplish both their mission and vision, and utilized in creating added value which improves business performance (Krajcovicova et al., 2012). There are similarities and contrasts in managerial competencies across cultures and work environments (Khoshouei et al., 2013), which require the replication of this investigation in Nigeria. Be that as it may, organizations in Nigeria encounter various challenges that range from competition with foreign-made products, to larger businesses in Nigeria. Thus, in order for SMEs in Nigeria to stay in business irrespective of these hitches, they need skills and competences that will permit them to make known their products and enterprises to their customers at value that will yield better

deals and gainfulness (Mohammed et al., 2017). Likewise, Sidek and Mohamed (2014) suggested that reviews on the relationship between managerial competencies and SME performance are somewhat rare, accordingly future research may be supported by utilising a sample covering a more diverse set of businesses. The efficiency and effectiveness of managers requires managerial skills. Lack of these skills may decrease the capability and success of businesses (Abbaszadeh et al., 2012).

Hellreigel et al. (2014) stated that managerial competencies are a set of observable or potential behaviours by which managers, as individuals, may demonstrate knowledge, skills, and attitudes, or the synergy between them as personal attributes, adding value and better results for themselves. Brits and Veldsman (2014), described competencies as a composite of the skills, attributes and knowledge needed to perform a specific job.

Scholars claim that there is a positive relationship between managerial competencies and performance of a firm (Akande, 2011; Velu & Manxhari, 2017). The success or failure of SMMEs can be attributed to good managerial competencies or lack thereof respectively (Bhardwaj & Punia, 2013). According to Bhardwaj (2016), effective and efficient managers are vital for improving business performance mainly because human resources or people are the most important resource for any organisation. To be an effective, managers should develop several competencies that enable them to perform competently. Hellriegel et al. (2014), stated communication competencies, teamwork competencies, strategic action competencies, self-management competencies, global awareness competencies and planning competencies as important to all managers.

It was pointed out by Chye et al. (2010) that managers ought to be good organisers, coordinators, administrators and communicators to improve the performance of their businesses. Chyle et al. (2010) emphasized that managerial competencies are business practical aptitudes that have been assuming an undeniably critical part in the improvement of SMEs. However, Sparl et al. (2013) could not find the association between managerial competencies and the performance of enterprises when they conducted a study in Austria pointing out that there may also be other factors that affect the performance of firms besides managerial competencies, and managerial competencies do not always have an effect on the performance of firms. These managerial competencies can influence the performance of each SME manager or owners. Management includes completing work through other individuals (employees). In this manner, communication skills are fundamental for viable managerial performance and they incorporate casual correspondence, formal correspondence and negotiation (Steyn, 2014).

Communication Competencies

Communication competencies have become a focus in higher education over the past couple of decades as educational policy makers and advocates have stressed a “back to basics” mentality (McCroskey, 1984). Over and over again, effective communication is often included as a primary undergraduate learning goal along with other key skills like writing, critical thinking, and problem solving. For most people communication is simply talk. It is a natural event. Merriam-Webster Dictionary (2022) defines communication as a process by which information is exchanged between individuals through a common system of symbols, signs, or behavior. The fundamental problem with defining communication as nothing more than information exchange is that information exchange is only a necessary but not a sufficient condition for understanding the complex process of communication. The naive perspective which allows one to define communication as simple information exchange suggests that one can simply define engineering as “the art of managing engines” – a definition unlikely to

resonate with most professionals who study mechanical, electrical, chemical, civil, or biological engineering.

When we communicate, we transmit (as by speech, signals, writing, or behavior) information (thoughts and emotions) so that it is satisfactorily received and understood. Human beings do not exchange data—we understand information. Communication researchers refer to the process as “sharing meaning” and prefer to define communication as “the management of messages for the purpose of creating meaning.” In other words, the goal of communication is shared meaning and the primary function of communication research is to generate new knowledge about how best to maximize the achievement of goals. A goal is nothing more than something you want to achieve. Communication goals are linked to another person’s thoughts and feelings. There are at least three general types of communication goals (Nordquist, 2019):

- I. Self-Presentation Goals (who we are and how we want to be perceived),
- II. Relational Goals (how we develop, maintain, and terminate relationships), and
- III. Instrumental Goals (how we manipulate others, gain compliance, manage interpersonal conflict, use and recognize interpersonal influence strategies (anchoring and contrast effects, reciprocity, commitment, liking, social proof, authority, and scarcity), etc.).

Communication is, therefore, strategic in as much as it is goal-driven. The primary goal of small group communication is to share meaning which leads to effective decision-making and problem-solving. But how does one determine the effectiveness and appropriateness of any given interaction? And even more important, how do we know if communication is competent?

Competencies mean that an individual has the ability to do something well. You are capable of performing a task or job effectively. Competences can include the knowledge and skills needed to solve a quadratic equation. Or, it can comprise the much larger and more diverse clusters of skills, or competencies, needed to lead a multinational corporation (Winston, 2020). The concept of competences is creeping into our lives, pervading our thinking about developing people of all ages – from new babes to weathered professionals. We find it in modern human resources departments in our workplace, and in innovating schools experimenting with competences-based education.

Communication competencies refer to a complex construct that has been widely debated in the communication field. McCroskey (1984) initiated this debate when he discussed competences in terms of skills, performance, and effectiveness. These arguments then inspired Brian Spitzberg to develop a precise definition, which suggests that communication competences comprise three interdependent constructs: knowledge, skill, and motivation. In other words, communication competences refer to an individual’s knowledge, skill, and motivation to accomplish a particular goal (Allen, 2017). These are interdependent constructs, meaning that all three are needed to achieve communication competences. For example, an individual may possess the knowledge needed to accomplish a goal, but lack the skill or ability to do so. Likewise, an individual may be motivated to achieve a particular goal, but may as well lack the necessary skill to do so.

The term communication competences refer to both the tacit knowledge of a language and the ability to use it effectively (Nordquist, 2019). The concept of communicative competences grew out of resistance to the concept of linguistic competences introduced by Noam Chomsky. Most scholars now consider linguistic competences to be a part of

communicative competences. Communication competencies refer to the knowledge of effective and appropriate communication patterns and the ability to use and adapt that knowledge in various contexts (Cooley & Roach, 1984).

Going further, Rickheit and Hans (2018) defined communication competences as the ability to interact well with others. He explains, the term "well" refers to "accuracy, clarity, comprehensibility, coherence, expertise, effectiveness and appropriateness". A much more complete operationalization is provided by Young et al. (2014) when he suggested that communication competences is best understood as "a situational ability to set realistic and appropriate goals and to maximize their achievement by using knowledge of self, other, context, and communication theory to generate adaptive communication performances".

From the foregoing, communication competences is defined in this work as the ability to relate seamlessly with superiors and subordinates in speech and writing in a way that fosters group cohesion. Communication competences is measured by determining if, and to what degree, the goals of interaction are achieved. As earlier emphasized, the function of communication is to maximize the achievement of "shared meaning." van Lehn (2017) emphasizes three interdependent themes: control, responsibility, and foresight; and argues that to be competent, we must "not only 'know' and 'know how,' we must also 'do' and 'know that we did'". He defines communication competences as "the degree to which individuals perceive they have satisfied their goals in a given social situation without jeopardizing their ability or opportunity to pursue their other subjectively more important goals". This combination of cognitive and behavioral perspectives is consistent with Fitts (2015) argument that communication competences is: The ability of an interactant to choose among available communicative behaviors in order that he (sic) may successfully accomplish his (sic) own interpersonal goals during an encounter while maintaining the face and line of his (sic) fellow interactants within the constraints of the situation.

A useful framework for understanding communication competences was designed by Rickheit and Hans (2018) and is known as the component model of competences because it is comprised of three specific dimensions: motivation (an individual's approach or avoidance orientation in various social situations), knowledge (plans of action; knowledge of how to act; procedural knowledge), and skill (behaviors actually performed).

Methodology

The study adopted descriptive survey research design. The population of the study consisted of 729 final year business education students. The sample size of the study consisted of 248 final year business education students drawn from three tertiary institutions in Rivers State. The instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled "Entrepreneurship Competencies Required by Business Education Students for Establishing Small Scale Ventures Questionnaire (ECRBESESSVQ). Mean and standard deviations were used to answer the research questions while Z-test was used to test the hypotheses at the 0.05 level of significance level.

Research Question 1: To what extent do managerial competencies required by business education students for establishing of small scale ventures in Rivers State?

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation of Response on the Managerial Competencies Required by Business Education Students for Establishing of Small Scale Ventures

S/N	Questionnaire Items on Extent of Managerial Competencies	Responses					
		Male Students N = 107			Female Students N = 114		
		Mean	SD	Remark	Mean	SD	Remark
1.	Integrity.	3.21	1.461	High Extent	3.19	1.451	High Extent
2.	Problem solving.	3.19	1.449	High Extent	3.32	1.507	High Extent
3.	Creativity.	3.40	1.546	High Extent	3.32	1.535	High Extent
4.	Conflict resolution.	3.28	1.491	High Extent	3.26	1.483	High Extent
5.	Vision.	3.32	1.508	High Extent	3.38	1.535	High Extent
6.	Interpersonal communication.	3.23	1.47	High Extent	3.32	1.507	High Extent
Grand Mean		3.27			3.31		

Source: Field Data (2022).

Table 1 summaries the mean of male and female students on managerial competencies required for establishing small scale ventures. Table 4.3 under male students reveals mean scores above 2.5 across all the items with a grand mean score of 3.27. This implies that the male students affirmed that, to a high extent, they possess managerial competencies required by business education students for establishing of small scale ventures, especially in terms of integrity, problem solving, creativity, conflict resolution, etc. Thus, the male students in the three studied tertiary institutions in Rivers State held that, to a high extent, they possess managerial competencies required by business education students for establishing of small scale ventures.

Table 1 under female students reveals mean scores above 2.5 across all the items with a grand mean score of 3.31. This implies that the male students affirmed that, to a high extent, they possess managerial competencies required by business education students for establishing of small scale ventures, especially in terms of integrity, problem solving, creativity, conflict resolution, vision, etc. Hence, the male students in the three studied tertiary institutions in Rivers State held that they possess managerial competencies required by business education students for establishing of small scale ventures.

Research Question 2: To what extent do communication competencies required by business education students for establishing of small scale ventures in Rivers State?

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation of Response on Communication Competencies Required by Business Education Students for Establishing of Small Scale Ventures

S/N	Questionnaire Items on Extent of Communication Competencies	Responses					
		Male Students N = 107			Female Students N = 114		
		Mean	SD	Remark	Mean	SD	Remark
7.	Effective delegation and decision making skill.	3.43	1.559	High Extent	3.32	1.507	High Extent
8.	Ability to communicate effectively with customers.	3.39	1.542	High Extent	3.21	1.459	High Extent
9.	Active listening.	3.07	1.398	High Extent	3.14	1.427	High Extent
10.	Public speaking skills.	3.03	1.377	High Extent	3.15	1.431	High Extent
11.	Negotiation skill.	3.08	1.402	High Extent	3.15	1.411	High Extent
12.	Diplomacy.	3.35	1.521	High Extent	3.20	1.455	High Extent
Grand Mean		3.23			3.19		

Source: Field Data (2022).

Table 2 summaries the mean of male and female students on communication competencies required for establishing small scale ventures. Table 4.4 under male students reveals mean scores above 2.5 across all the items with a grand mean score of 3.23. This implies that the male students affirmed that, to a high extent, they possess communication competencies required by business education students for establishing of small scale ventures, especially in terms of ability to communicate effectively with customers, active listening, public speaking, negotiation skill, and diplomacy. Thus, the male students in the three studied tertiary institutions in Rivers State held that they possess communication competencies required by business education students for establishing of small scale ventures.

Table 2 under female students reveals mean scores above 2.5 across all the items with a grand mean score of 3.19. This implies that the male students affirmed that, to a high extent, they possess communication competencies required by business education students for establishing of small scale ventures, especially in terms of ability to communicate effectively with customers, active listening, public speaking, negotiation skill, and diplomacy. Hence, the male students in the three studied tertiary institutions in Rivers State held that they possess communication competencies required by business education students for establishing of small scale ventures.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female business education students on the extent managerial competencies required for establishing Small Scale Ventures in Rivers State.

Table 3: Z-test Analysis on Male and Female Students on the Relationship between Managerial Competencies Required by Business Education Students for Establishing Small Scale Ventures

Variable Groups	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Df	z-calculated	z-tab	Remark
Male Students	107	3.27	1.488	219	1.63	1.96	Accepted
Female Students	114	3.31	1.503				

Source: Data Analysis (2022).

Table 3 reveals z-calculated value of 1.63 which is less than the z-tabulated value of 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference in the mean responses on managerial competencies required by Business Education students for establishing small scale ventures in Rivers state based on gender was accepted. This implies that both male and female students concurred to the fact that Business Education students' managerial competencies enhance establishing of small scale ventures in Rivers State. This finding implies that the managerial acumen gained by Business Education students strongly impacts in their ability to establish and manage businesses, especially small scale venture. In line with this finding, using information gathered from participants in Kelantan and Terengganu microfinance banks, Sidek and Mohammed (2014) conducted a study on the relationship between managerial skills and the growth of microfinance institutions. Utilizing the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) methodology, the study discovered that the development of small businesses was positively and significantly impacted by all aspects of managerial skills, including technical, general, and conceptual skills.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female business education students on the extent communication competencies required for establishing Small Scale Ventures in Rivers State.

Table 4: Z-test Analysis on Male and Female Students on the Relationship between Communication Competencies Required by Business Education Students for Establishing Small Scale Ventures

Variable Groups	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Df	z-calculated	z-tab	Remark
Male Students	107	3.23	1.466	219	1.66	1.96	Accepted
Female Students	114	3.19	1.448				

Source: Field Data (2022)

Table 4 reveals z-calculated value of 1.66 which is less than the z-tabulated value of 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference in the mean responses on communication competencies required by Business Education students for establishing small scale ventures in Rivers state based on gender was accepted. This implies that both male and female students concurred to the fact that Business Education students' communication competencies enhance establishing of small scale ventures in Rivers State. This finding implies that a person's financial acumen has a positive implication in their ability to establish and manage businesses, especially small scale ventures. In other words, an individual such as a business education student needs to adopt financial management practices so as to be able to establish and financially grow a business. Scholars and academicians are becoming increasingly interested in the precise relationship between financial management techniques and financial performance. Since most issues SMEs face can be avoided with good financial management practices, the relevance of financial management practices to organizations cannot be overstated (Uluyol, 2013).

Conclusion

The study has shown how instrumental managerial competencies and communication competencies are to the establishing of small scale enterprises, especially among Business Education students. Bothering on the empirical analysis carried out, the study concluded that managerial competencies and communication competencies are veritable tools through which students and other individuals can utilize to establish businesses, especially small scale ventures. Inculcating Business Education students with all required entrepreneurship competencies will not only help them gain the ability to establish small and medium scale enterprises, but also enhance their capacity to grow and have the business stand the test of time.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, it was therefore recommended that:

1. Undergraduate Business Education students should be inculcated with managerial competencies such as the ability to carry out feasibility studies, prepare policies, manage human and material resources, etc., as these will aid them to establish and run businesses successfully.
2. Business Education students should be trained with the ability to communicate effectively with customers through face to face interactions, phone calls, texts, emails, video chats, instant messages etc., hence building more business acumen in them.

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