

Gender and Managers' Rating on the Entrepreneurial Skills Needed by Business Education Graduates for Effective Management of Small Enterprises in Enugu State

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Abstract: The study assessed the effect of gender on the entrepreneurial skills needed by business education graduates for effective management of small enterprises in Enugu State. The design of the study was descriptive survey. Population of the study was 267 managers of registered small enterprises in the study area. The simple random sampling was used to select a sample size of 80 managers. Two research questions guided the study and two null hypotheses were tested. A structured questionnaire containing 49 items validated by three experts was used for data collection. Test-retest method was used to establish the reliability of the instrument. Pearson product moment correlation coefficient of 0.91, 0.87, 0.87, 0.91, 0.96 and 0.66 for the six clusters (B1 to B6) with an overall coefficient of 0.86 was obtained. Seventy three (73) duly completed copies of the instrument were retrieved and used for data analysis. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions and to determine the homogeneity of the respondents' ratings respectively while the t-test was used to test the hypotheses. Findings revealed that gender was not a significant factor on the entrepreneurial skills needed by business education graduates for effective management of small enterprises. Based on the findings, the researcher recommended among others that, administrators of tertiary institutions should provide more teaching resources to Business Education Departments so as to facilitate the training of students in management, accounting, marketing, creative, interpersonal and innovative skills as needed by business education graduates offices for successful entrepreneurship.

Keywords: Entrepreneurial Skills, Business Education Graduates, Managers, Management and Small Scale Enterprises.

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Introduction

Entrepreneurship is thus, the process of learning the skills needed to assume the risk of establishing a business. The skills acquired in any of the area of business related programme promotes training in entrepreneurship as well as equip graduates with requisite skills to establish and run small businesses of their own. Entrepreneurship is also the willingness of an

individual to take business or business related risks in order to organize and manage a business venture in a competitive global business environment that is constantly evolving.

Ezeugwu (2013) opined 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. Unemployment has also led to the formulation of educational policies to provide relevant knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary for individuals to be entrepreneurs rather than job seekers. This is why the Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN) (2013) emphasized the acquisition of appropriate skills, and abilities (both mental and physical) as equipment for the individuals to live in and contribute significantly to the development of the society.

According to Medugu and Dawha (2015) viewed skill as the capacity to perform a task or tasks skillfully and effectively. The author stated that to be skillful means the individual has acquired the knowledge, competencies and attitudes required in order to perform successfully at a specified proficiency level in a given work. An entrepreneur who wants to succeed in small scale enterprises should possess skills such as management, creative, innovative, marketing, accounting, interpersonal, and problem-solving (Andrea, 2012).

Andrea maintained that enhancing these skills is important in developing an entrepreneur capable of starting up his own small business and succeeding in it. The author, however, lamented that Nigerian graduates (especially business education graduates) do not possess adequate entrepreneurial skills and affirmed that it is an obvious gap in the curriculum. Skills like creativity, innovativeness, interpersonal and time management should be taught in a business education programme because; these skills could be needed for successful entrepreneurship.

Olusegun (2012) highlighted other skills such as financial, communication, information and communication technology, risk-taking and decision-making as needed for business education graduates desiring to be successful entrepreneurs. However, this study focused on creative and innovative skills as needed by business education graduates for effective management of small enterprises. In line with skills needed for successful business, Maris (2010) stated that innovative skills are important in any decision.

According to the author, innovative skills involve ability to apply information, imagination and initiative in deriving greater or different values from resources. Innovative skills include ability to generate new ideas and convert them into useful products. In business, innovation often results when ideas are applied by the company in order to further satisfy the needs and expectations of the customers. In a social context, innovation helps to create new methods for alliance creation, joint venturing, flexible work hours, and creation of buyers' purchasing power. Creative and innovative skills are considered to be inseparable from entrepreneurship, which in turn, manifested in the act of starting up and running enterprise. The reverse of creativity and innovativeness is business failure and lack of new ventures. When creative skills are lacking, it is obvious that a coherent framework for the implementation of a strong entrepreneurial culture will equally be missing; thus, resulting in unemployment. Therefore, creative and innovative skills are needed by business education students to be able to effectively manage small enterprises in the future.

Aggarwal (2011) defined small enterprises as business enterprises having a maximum asset base of #20 million (US \$ 1.78 million) excluding land and working capital. The number of employees is defined as “not less than 10 and not more than 300”. This study adopts the definition of Iyekekpolor (2012) which viewed small scale enterprises as enterprises set up and mainly managed by its owners called “owners or managers” and which employ between 10-99 people with the aim of making profit.

However, Adelakun (2008) regretted that SMEs managers are worried that some skills students of tertiary institutions are equipped are not in line with what is needed to be successful entrepreneurs in this 21st century. This, according to the author is one of the main causes of high rate of failure of SMEs in Nigeria. In support, Casson (2004) recognized that an entrepreneur needs different skills and strategies to be able to make good judgment and co-ordinate scarce resources. An entrepreneur may be a man or a woman for it is not gender conscious.

The Manager of small enterprises could be the owner of the business or someone employed by the owner to take care of the business on their behalf and the manager could be male or female as the case may be. The findings of Olaniyi *et al.*, (2012) reveals that being a male or female has nothing to do with valuing a specific type of entrepreneurial skills. Similarly, the author averred that choice of entrepreneurial skills has nothing to do with being a male or female. This study therefore sought to determine the effect of gender on the entrepreneurial skills needed by business education graduates for effective management of small business in Enugu State.

Statement of the Problem

The high rate of unemployment among Nigerian graduates is at alarming. This is because our graduates don't want to be creative and innovative. Thus, business education graduates are only dependent on the initiatives of colonial masters without bringing into existence new ideas, be it an artistic object or form, a solution to a problem, or a method, or a device.

In this 21st century economy, innovative and creative skills are a necessity for any entrepreneur who wishes to stay ahead of his/her competitors. The possession of creative skill gives rise to self-employment. In order to curb these unemployment menace, business education graduates needs to seek new ways to create value in products, processes and services, ability to seek different points of view, ask questions, explore options and solicit feedbacks, adaptability and flexibility skills, ability to think outside the box and approach challenges creatively. However, managers of SMSE do not initiate new ideas, they are following the laid down rules of the owners not minding the effect it has on the success of the enterprise. This is the gap that the study tends to cover.

Creative skills required for Effective Management of Small Scale Enterprises

The high rate of unemployment among Nigerian graduates means that tertiary institutions need to equip students with creative skills to become self-reliant on graduation. Creativity is very important because it is inevitable for success in business creation. Abanyam (2014) stated that creativity is a mental process that involves the application of divergent thinking, critical thinking, and other problem-solving skills needed to provide solution to problems. Balzac (2006) on the other hand averred that creativity is the ability to bring into existence new ideas, be it an artistic object or form, a solution to a problem, or a method, or a device. The whole idea about entrepreneurship is about creativity which will generate employment opportunities to others. Creativity is the most effective method for bridging the gap between

science and the market place, creating new enterprises, and bringing new products and services to the market. These entrepreneurial activities significantly affect the economy of an area by building the economic base and providing jobs. To be enterprising is to keep one's eyes open and one's mind active.

It is to be skilled enough, confident enough, creative enough, and disciplined enough to seize opportunities that present themselves regardless of the economy (Nwafor, 2007). Lyve (2005) stated that creative skills compares favourably with the basic skills required for starting, developing, financing and marketing business enterprise. Many people wrongly assume that anyone who manages a large company is an entrepreneur. It should be noted that many managers of big companies carry out decisions made by higher-ranking executives. These managers are not entrepreneurs because they do not have final control over the company and they do not make decisions that involve risking the company's resources (Akande, 2010).

Furthermore, Abanyam (2014) listed creative skill as ability to:

1. Identify business opportunities,
2. Generate ideas suitable to the opportunities identified,
3. Set appropriate businesses goals,
4. make long and short term planning,
5. Take a decision and act upon it,
6. Organize resources for goal attainment,
7. Implement plans for goal attainment,
8. Evaluate all activities based on set goals,
9. Make appropriate use of feedback,
10. Manage time and meet job schedules,
11. Solve both routine and non-routine problems;
12. Work under pressure,
13. Motivate workers,
14. Cope with uncertainty, and
15. Analytical reasoning skills.

Innovative Skills Required for Effective Management of Small Scale Enterprises

Innovative skills are the type of skills that allow individuals to become successful in their businesses. According to Miron (2011), innovative skills are not just necessary business skills for entrepreneurs, but also for managers to succeed in their day-to-day business operations. Miron stated that innovative skills are a combination of cognitive skills (the ability to think creatively and critically), behavioural skills (the ability to solve problems, to manage risk), functional skills (writing, reading, numeracy skills), and technical skills (ability to carry out a research, project to successful completion).

The Conference Board of Canada (CBC, 2016) viewed innovative skills as those skills a business graduate need to contribute to an organizational performance—to produce new and improved products, processes and services. According to the CBC, some of the innovative skills are ability to seek new ways to create value in products, processes and services, ability to seek different points of view, ask questions, explore options and solicit feedbacks, adaptability and flexibility skills, ability to think outside the box and approach challenges creatively. Others are ability to evaluate solutions to make recommendations or decisions, ability to set goals and priorities and ability to plan for contingencies.

Asad (2014) pointed out that in this 21st century economy, innovative skills is a necessity for any entrepreneur who wishes to stay ahead of his/her competitors. Asad highlighted ability to show initiative, commitment, and persistence to get a job done as the main innovative skills. Similarly, Mar (2013) averred that there are over 60 innovative skills needed for entrepreneurial success. Mar however gave some of these skills to include the ability to perceive, analyze and manage one's emotions, ability to overcome logical biases, ability to solve novel problems, technological skills and collaborative skills.

According to Eze (2011), innovative skills are collaborative skills needed by an innovator to develop business ideas, and successfully implement such ideas. An innovator is used too widely to describe an individual. Innovators are creative thinkers. In other words, individuals who are able to generate creative ideas that becomes the basis of innovations. Sometimes, however, "innovators" can also be called "innovative leaders." Innovative leaders are creative visionaries who have big ideas and, most importantly, can motivate people around them to turn those ideas into reality.

According to Davidson (2011) innovative leaders does not even need to be the person who creates the idea behind an innovation. Often, they simply recognize a great idea, perhaps devised by a subordinate and envision the path that leads to that idea's becoming a reality. Gibson (2010) stated that creative skill is the ability to form a vision around an idea or set of ideas. In order to succeed as an entrepreneur, an innovative leader needs a range of skills such as imagination and communication, and interpersonal skills.

The innovative leader needs a powerful imagination and excellent communications skills. They also needs to have confidence in their team and the ability to work together to achieve that dream (Agbonifoh, 2009) .The innovative leader is not a micro-manager. They focus on the big picture and works with creative thinkers who can add to that vision and make it greater. Micro-managers, on the other hand, tend to stifle creativity and focus more on the details—causing them and their teams to lose sight of the big picture. The innovative leader needs to be able to communicate their vision and generate enthusiasm for it.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to ascertain managers' ratings of entrepreneurial skills needed by business education graduates for effective management of small enterprises in Enugu State. Specifically, the study ascertained managers' ratings of:

1. Creative skills needed by business education graduates for effective management of small enterprises in Enugu State.
2. Innovation skills needed by business education graduates for effective management of small enterprises in Enugu State.

Scope of the Study

This research study is delimited to ascertaining the entrepreneurial skills needed by business education graduates for effective management of small enterprises. In doing this, the study covered creative and innovation skills that could be employed for effective management of small enterprises. This study was limited to the responses of managers of small enterprises in Enugu State who have business education graduates working in their company.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What are the managers' ratings of creative skills needed by business education graduates for effective management of small enterprises in Enugu State?
2. What are the managers' ratings of innovation skills needed by business education graduates for effective management of small enterprise in Enugu State?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significant:

1. There is no significant difference in the ratings of male and female managers regarding the creative skills needed by business education graduates for effective management of small enterprises.
2. There is no significant difference in the ratings of male and female managers regarding the innovation skill needed by business education graduates for effective management of small enterprises.

Method

Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study consisted of 267 managers of registered small enterprises in Enugu State. (Source: Ministry of Commerce and Industry as at October 15th, 2016). The sample size for this study was 80 male and female managers of small scale enterprises that have business education graduate working with them in Enugu State. The sample size was determined using proportionate stratified random sampling technique based on 30 percent from strata. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled "Entrepreneurial Skills Needed by Business Education Graduates Questionnaire (ESNBEGQ)".

The questionnaire contains 48 items in parts 1 and 2. The questionnaire was validated by three experts-two experts in business education and one in measurement and evaluation. To establish the instrument's reliability, test- retest was utilized. The data from the two tests were analyzed using Pearson product moment correlation co-efficient which yielded the following values 0.91, 0.87, 87 0.91, 0.96 and 0.66 for each Cluster respectively with an overall value of 0.86 to determine the degree of reliability.

Data collected in the study regarding research questions were analyzed using mean and standard deviation while t-test was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. Decision on the questionnaire items and research question was interpreted relative to the real limit of numbers as follows: Very highly needed (VHN), Highly needed (HN), Moderately needed (MN), Lowly needed (LN) and Very lowly needed (VLN). Where the calculated z-value was less than the critical t-value, it meant that there was no significant difference and the hypothesis was not rejected. Conversely, where the calculated t-value was equal to or greater than the critical t-value, it meant that there was significant difference and the hypothesis was rejected.

Research Questions 1

What are the managers' ratings of creative skills needed by business education graduates for effective management of small enterprises in Enugu State?

Data relating to this research question is analyzed and presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Respondents’ mean ratings on the creative skills needed by business education graduates for effective management of small enterprises (N = 73)

S/N	Creative Skills	\bar{X}	SD	Remarks
	Ability to:			
1	Identify business opportunities	4.36	0.78	Highly Needed
2	Generate suitable ideas to exploit business opportunities	4.49	0.62	Highly Needed
3	Turn ideas into products and/or services	4.07	0.84	Highly Needed
4	Set appropriate business goals	3.97	0.97	Highly Needed
5	Cope with uncertainty	3.78	0.97	Highly Needed
6	Reason analytically	4.08	0.78	Highly Needed
7	Correctly solve both routine and non-routine business problems	4.39	0.98	Highly Needed
8	Develop a range of strategies for business success	4.61	0.73	Very Highly Needed
Cluster Mean		3.68		Highly Needed

Data in Table 1 shows that out of the 8 items listed on creative skill needed by business education graduates, respondents indicated rated item 8 very highly needed while the remaining seven items (items 1 to 7) are highly needed with mean scores ranged from 3.78 to 4.49. The cluster mean score of 3.68 shows that on the whole, managers of small scale enterprises in the area of the study agreed that creative skills are highly needed by business education graduates for effective management of small enterprises. The standard deviations for all the items are within the range of 0.62 to 0.98. This shows that the respondents are not wide apart in their ratings.

Research Question 2

What are the managers’ ratings of innovative skills needed by business education graduates for effective management of small enterprises in Enugu State?

Data relating to this research question is analyzed and presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Respondents’ mean ratings on the innovative skills needed by business education graduates for effective management of small enterprises (N = 73)

S/N	Innovative Skills	\bar{X}	SD	Remarks
	Ability to:			
1	Initiate developments in product/service	4.28	0.72	Highly Needed
2	Contribute to improvements in the production process	4.21	0.86	Highly Needed
3	Contribute to product innovation	3.52	1.01	Highly Needed
4	Initiate suitable means of carrying out tasks	3.74	1.01	Highly Needed
5	Up to date in professional development	3.67	1.02	Highly Needed
6	Share expertise with employees	4.09	0.92	Highly Needed
7	Use information from various sources: handbooks, reports, intranet, Internet for business development	3.84	1.02	Highly Needed
8	Help employees recognize new business opportunities.	3.99	1.02	Highly Needed
Cluster Mean		3.92		Highly Needed

Data in Table 2 shows that out of the 8 items listed on innovative skills, respondents rated all the items highly needed with mean scores ranged from 3.52 to 4.28. The cluster mean score of 3.92 shows that on the whole, managers of small scale enterprises in the area of the study agreed that innovative skills are highly needed by business education graduates for effective management of small enterprises. The standard deviations for all the items are within the range of 0.72 to 1.02. This shows that the respondents are not wide apart in their ratings.

Hypothesis 1

There is no significant difference in the ratings of male and female managers regarding creative skills needed by graduates of business education for effective management of small enterprises.

Data obtained in respect of hypothesis 1 were analyzed and presented in Table 3.

Table 3. t-test analysis of male and female managers of small enterprises on the creative skills needed by business education graduates for effective management of small enterprises (N = 73)

Gender	N	Mean	SD	df	t-cal	t-crit	Remark
Male	48	4.12	0.82	71	0.23	1.96	Not Significant
Female	25	4.09	0.83				

Data in Table 3 shows that the calculated t - value of 0.23 is less than the critical t -value of 1.96 ($0.23 < 1.96$) at 0.05 level of significance and 71 degree of freedom. This means that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female small enterprise managers regarding creative skills needed by business education graduates for effective management of small enterprises. Therefore, the null hypothesis was accepted.

Hypothesis 2

There is no significant difference in the ratings of male and female managers regarding innovative skills needed by graduates of business education for effective management of small enterprises.

Data obtained in respect of hypothesis 2 were analyzed and presented in Table 4.

Table 4. t-test analysis of male and female managers of small enterprises on the innovative skills needed by business education graduates for effective management of small enterprises (N = 73)

Gender	N	Mean	SD	df	t-cal	t-crit	Remark
Male	48	4.41	0.70	71	0.15	1.96	Not Significant
Female	25	4.43	0.70				

Data in Table 4 shows that the calculated t - value of 0.15 is less than the critical t -value of 1.96 ($0.15 < 1.96$) at 0.05 level of significance and 71 degree of freedom. This means that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female small enterprise managers regarding innovative skills needed by business education graduates for effective management of small enterprises. Therefore, the null hypothesis was accepted.

Summary of Findings

From the results of the analysis presented in this chapter, the findings of the study are summarized as follows:

1. Managers of small scale enterprises in Enugu State indicated that creative skills are highly needed by business education graduates for effective management of small scale enterprises. Gender did not significantly influence respondents' mean ratings in this regard.
2. Managers of small scale enterprises in Enugu State rated innovative skills highly needed by business education graduates for effective management of small scale enterprises. Gender did not significantly influence respondents' mean ratings in this regard.

Creative Skills Needed by Business Education Graduates for Effective Management of Small Enterprises

The analysis showed that the respondents in Enugu State indicated that creative skills are highly needed by business education graduates for effective management of small scale enterprises. The findings of this study corroborated with Amesi and Akpomi (2013) which revealed that entrepreneurs' success depends on possession of creative skills to a moderate extent. Amesi and Akpomi further stated that business education graduates need creative skills for enhanced entrepreneurs' success. Abanyam (2014) on the other hand stated that creative skills enable entrepreneurs to apply divergent thinking, critical thinking and other problem-solving skills needed to provide solution to business problems.

The respondents indicated that creative skills such as ability to identify business opportunities, generate suitable ideas to exploit business opportunities, turn ideas into products and/or services, set appropriate business goals, cope with uncertainty, reason analytically, and correctly solve both routine and non-routine business problems among others are highly needed by business graduates for effective management of small enterprises while ability to develop a range of strategies for business success are very highly needed. According to Niels and Harding (2006), creative skills drive the development of new products and the way entrepreneurs do business. The authors averred that possession of creative skills arm future entrepreneurs with veritable tools to create new enterprise, and bringing new products and services to the market.

In line with the importance of creative skills in business education, McFadden (2013) stated that it is important in this 21st century that entrepreneurs understand global issues. And to successfully adapt to new change, they must possess creative skills. All entrepreneurs need to possess creative skills because, as Bessant and Tidd (2007) explained: not only the initial business idea requires a significant creative leap, but much of the rest of the entrepreneurial process, which contains hundreds of small problem-finding and solving exercises, needs creative inputs.

Creative skills are considered the most essential skills of an entrepreneur. Without creativity there are no novel and innovative products (Giang and Can, 2011). The test of the fourth hypothesis showed that male and female manager of small enterprises in Enugu State did not differ significantly in their mean ratings on the extent creative skills are needed by business education graduates for effective management of small enterprises.

Innovative Skills Needed by Business Education Graduates for Effective Management of Small Enterprises

Findings of the study revealed that managers of small scale enterprises in Enugu State rated innovative skills highly needed by business education graduates for effective management of small enterprises. The findings of the study agree with the study of Eze (2011) which showed that innovative skills are the key skills for entrepreneurial success and therefore needed by business related graduates for effective management of small businesses. In support, Ezeanokwasa and Nwachukwu (2012) asserted that innovative skills contribute to entrepreneurship success and therefore reduce unemployment. Ezenwafor and Olaniyi (2017) study also revealed that the respondents rated innovative skills highly needed by business education graduates for entrepreneurial development. Ezenwafor and Olaniyi opined that adopting suitable approaches could help all the graduates acquire innovative skills in order to become successful entrepreneurs in the future who contribute to entrepreneurial development of the area.

The fact that managers of small enterprises agreed that innovative skills are highly needed by business education graduates for entrepreneurial success is not surprising considering the importance of innovation to entrepreneurship development. According to Okpara (2007), the growth and development of an enterprise cannot be sustained without innovations (usually in the product or services or in its marketing) with additional innovations, firms become glamorous. Introducing new products is usually seen as part of the process of innovation, which is itself seen as the engine driving continued small business growth and development. Okpara (2007) stated that successful entrepreneurs are always looking for unique opportunities to fill needs or wants. In support, Chukwone and Obichili (2011) affirmed that creative and innovative skills are highly needed by graduates. Ayonmike (2011) corroborated that innovative ability was one of the important entrepreneurial skills needed by technical and vocational education graduates to succeed in their businesses.

The test of six hypothesis showed that male and female managers of small enterprises in Enugu State did not differ significantly in their mean ratings on the extent innovation skills are needed by business education graduates for effective management of small enterprises. The findings of this study concur with that of Alajami and Alsaleh (2011) which showed that innovative skills are important skills for all genders so as to succeed as entrepreneurs. Hean in Ezenwafor and Olaniyi (2017) argued that skills needed in small and medium enterprises are not gender sensitive and could not be influenced differently. This implies that all business education graduates need innovative skills for entrepreneurial development irrespective of gender.

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