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DEVELOPING ENTREPRENEURIAL SKILLS IN STUDENTS IN THE ERA OF PERSISTENT ECONOMIC CRISIS IN KANO STATE NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study focused on developing entrepreneurial skills in students in the era of persistent economic crisis in Kano state, Nigeria. Research questions used were two in number and descriptive survey research design was adopted for this study. The population of this study consisted of 1550 vocational education graduates who run their small businesses around Bayero University Kano, Federal College of Education Kano and Federal College of Education Technical Bichi. A sample of 150 small businesses was randomly selected and used for the study. Questionnaire tagged entrepreneurial skills in students in the era of persistent economic crisis in Nigeria was the instrument used for this study. The instrument was validated by three experts in business management and entrepreneurship studies from Bayero University Kano and reliability determined using Crombach Alpha which yielded 0.72. The data collected was analyzed and the questions answered using mean and standard deviation. The result showed that entrepreneurial skills development has significant relationship on the era of persistent economic crisis in Nigeria. In conclusion, skills development through the mandatory vocational program for NCE and Bsc/Ed undergraduate students of tertiary institutions in Nigeria are important consideration in the era of persistent economic crisis. Based on the findings the study recommended among others that entrepreneurial skills development should be encouraged by inspiring deserved students to acquire more training apart from the ones taught in the Universities and colleges by educational policy makers. The Universities and colleges should enrich the skills by adding more refresher courses related to the necessary skills in order to update students' abilities and also be maintained through making the training regularly and frequently so that the students will be more current using skills/abilities which will continue to impact positively on them while carrying business activities either as owners or employed.

Keywords: *skills, entrepreneurial skills, skill development, era of persistent economic crisis*

Introduction

Entrepreneurial skills have been a widespread topical issues in many countries for its' gains over time. The concern of entrepreneurial skills is entrenched from the desire to have students who are job creators than job seekers. This need was accentuated by the force to have college and university students introduced to free enterprise studies. High education programs focusing on the teaching of entrepreneurial studies have gone global and it had been predicted that imparting entrepreneurial skills among higher education students would become a major academic discipline for colleges and university in the 21st century. Traditionally, researchers have viewed entrepreneurial studies as an important mechanism for economic liberation due to its relationship with investment and new market opportunities. Intellectual had noted the need for entrepreneurial capabilities or skills that attention has to be put on both physical and financial resources, which determine the successful survival of enterprises, if the appropriate human capital competencies and structures are in place, they can organize the rest to make the enterprises exist and survive. This entails that the need for entrepreneurial skills has been established by previous scholars many years back. For instance, Enu (2012) acknowledged

that the entrepreneurs' business management skills must be given primary attention in handling issues of employment creation and survival of enterprises. Ogwu (2023) noted that entrepreneurial curricular acquisition at the post-basic education level is an important move to achieving economic development towards poverty reduction among youths in Nigeria. Ngerem, and Ezikpe, (2016) revealed that entrepreneurial skills acquisition is a viable medium of navigating the wheels of economic development for school graduates. Osakwe, (2015) acknowledged that entrepreneurship education generally is an innovative venture for job creation in small enterprises; provision of new ideas, ventures, quality product, technology, and market, to increase the Gross Domestic Products and standard of living of the people towards community development. To Hamisu, Adamu and Rabi'u (2024) entrepreneurial skill acquisition plays the role of improving the economic situation of Nigeria through the training of the students in different specialized fields that provides them with life skills that will make them to be productive entrepreneurs as it engenders creative and innovative ideas; enlarges the economic pie and increases personal freedom. Egele (2021), added to the need for entrepreneurial skills, indicates that lack of entrepreneur's skills are blamed for the business failure. To these writers, lack of entrepreneurial skills makes the person be competent, flexible and moderate or balanced in his/her work actions. Reuben (2011) elucidated that skills like turnaround strategies as a management function, internal decision making, must be taken to manage internal and external threats to the organization. So the way students are prepared in entrepreneurial skills establishes how they execute in all these changeable.

In the last decade, there has been growing economic downturns in Nigeria, leading to persistent economic crisis that has dropped in the capacity of government and corporate organizations to provide employment for all colleges and university graduates. This persistent economic crisis is characterized by violence, poverty and failing peace-keeping, responding to new economic and technological crimes. The circumstance has led to a paradigm reallocate from relying on government jobs to the acquisition of entrepreneurial skills for self-reliance. Nigeria as a nation is rapidly growing in population which leads to serious increase on demand for food, shelter, clothing and health care. The available white collar jobs are increasingly becoming inadequate to suck up all the graduates every year from the different institutions of higher learning. The mass unemployment situation has led to series of odd vices like armed robbery, human trafficking, kidnapping and assassinations all over in Nigeria. This circumstance has effect in instability and insecurity in the country and the problem of Boko Haram and other militant groups that are very rampart in Nigerian society today have been ascribed to this.

The general performance of enterprises, including those started by former students and the none-graduates has also been reported to be poor, as many are not able to survive for longer years (Pitan and Adedeji 2012). The intensity of creativity, team performance, social arrangement, tolerance and accountability has been reported to be inadequate (Egele, 2021). It has also been reported that entrepreneurial skill acquired by students are inadequate in the recent years (Akeke et al., 2022). Pitan and Adedeji (2012) have attributed it to the big disparity between the skills conveyed among the graduate's vis-a-vis those required in the job market, indicating that college and university graduates in Nigeria have been poorly prepared for work in current years. Adenike (2016) has ascribed it to inability of the entrepreneurship education curriculum to meet its preamble objectives, which has resulted into many clumsy amendments and transforms in the tutorial arrangement of the curricula over the years. Osakwe (2015) mentioned lack of awareness, counseling and orientation on entrepreneurial skills acquisition and lack of manpower, infrastructure and instructional facilities. Adamu (2013) observed not given the students opportunity of acquainting and exposing familiarity in handling equipment's and machines that are habitually not available in their institutions.

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Egele, (2021), opined that promotion of entrepreneurial skill education so as to equip students with relevant entrepreneurship skillsnwill serve as remedy to these problems. This study is therefore specifically important because of the high rate of unemployment among graduates today in Nigeria. There are other challenges facing the college and university students in Nigeria. Adeshina (2013) summated that the entrepreneurial environment is unfriendly and unfavorable to assess students' performance as employees or employers. The college and university students have high interest in prearranged employment and seem to find it complex to develop a positive approach towards self-employment. The entrepreneurship national curriculum is suspected to be insufficient; therefore, colleges and universities hardly prepare students for successful performance in the world of work, possibly because the curriculum content is blamed of over concentrating on assumption part not the practical aspect of the content (Adenike, 2016). Pitan and Adedeji (2012) established a very big divergence between the skills acquired by college and university students and the demands of their jobs in the market. Osakwe (2015) established lack of awareness, counseling and orientation on entrepreneurship education and lack of manpower and infrastructure/instructional facilities. Egele (2021) also distinguished that students are not given the opportunity of acquainting and exposing themselves to the needed familiarity in handling equipment's and machines that are habitually not available in their institutions and these in turn influence performance in the job market.

In the word of National Universities Commission (2015), every year universities turn out graduates leading to their increase in the labour market without corresponding job creation. These universities offer a variety of academic programs, one of which is a study in entrepreneurship skills acquisition which means to prepare students of the program for the world of work. Despite the entrepreneurship training, confirmation on how such courses figure students' skills and facilitate entry into self-employment remains astonishing, yet the specialty of entrepreneurship and performance of college and university students have fascinated concentration of many researchers in the nation.

Skills can be said to be the capability acquired by a person to work in any particular field as owner or employed and skill development is an essential element for a successful entrepreneurial culture in a country. Therefore, developing skills and competencies among colleges and university students in Nigeria has become a serious concern for educators and curriculum developers due to persistent economic crisis. This obliged federal government to introduce compulsory courses on entrepreneurship education that are core in all tertiary institutions in the country (NUC, 2015). Public policy makers have long recognized the importance of an entrepreneur as an advocate of economic development and hence maintained the enlargement of entrepreneurship education to increase entrepreneurial skills. This has led to a shift from general education to entrepreneurial skills development as a necessary way of developing and empowering the citizens, particularly the youths and indeed many colleges and universities have been supported and established entrepreneurial skills development centers (Sharma and Sharma, 2020). So if this energetic and dynamic youth's dividend can be transformed into a power house of human resource, they will play a major role in Nation building, eradication of poverty, unemployment and other social evils if they are provided with better skill training. This study is therefore conducted to specifically establish the required entrepreneurial skills that will boost the performance of students of colleges and universities as employers and employees after graduation, and the pressure of entrepreneurial skills development in students in Kano state, Nigeria has not been adequately addressed by preceding researchers.

Entrepreneurship is not just skill acquisition for acquirement sake. It is a gaining of skills and ideas for the sake of creating employment for ones-self and also for others. It also includes the improvement based on originality. Entrepreneurship leads to the improvement of

small, medium and sometimes large scale businesses based on imagination and uniqueness. The accomplishment of these businesses in turn helps in increasing the nation.

Skill development is therefore the perfecting up of one's skills that will help him in becoming an efficient and able human resource. The entrepreneur should therefore possess technical skills, ideas and management skills which are essential for the success of an endeavor. One of such skills is information and communication technology which is illustrated by employee empowerment and involves the making of unskilled and semiskilled workers to be skillful and functional in today's world of work. Entrepreneurial skills are therefore the basic skills required for starting, developing, financing and marketing business enterprises.

Ngerem, and Ezikpe, (2016) revealed that financial management skill, risk taking skill, communication skill, and human relations skill among others are entrepreneurial skills required for economic development and empowering of youths. The National policy FRN (2013), enlisted thirty-four entrepreneurial skills for some economic skills that would not only sustain individuals but also the nation. Some of these skills are incorporated at the post basic education level which ranges from auto body repair and spray painting, auto electrical work, auto mechanical work, auto parts merchandising, air conditioning and refrigeration, among others are specified under: Mechanical, agricultural, catering, tailoring, electrical, and a host of others (FRN, pp. 20-21). To British Council Core Skills (2014) entrepreneurial skills comprises of managing people, projects, communication and influencing, planning and organizing, analyzing data and problems, managing finance and resources, using technology, managing risks, developing business and managing account and partnerships. To Egele (2018), entrepreneurial skills are opportunity alertness, innovation, creativity, ability to interpret successful entrepreneurial role models and risk taking. Dauda and Muhammad (2019), identified entrepreneurial skills to include managerial or administrative skills, job/technical skills, human relations skills, innovative/enterprising skills, competitive skills, communication skills, conceptual/planning skills, supervisory/guidance skills, accordance skills, investigation/problem solving skills.

Some existing research has empirically maintained a positive outcome of entrepreneurial skills and performance of business enterprises. For example, Sharma and Sharma (2020) found that skill development in economy of a country assist in elimination of social problems like poverty, hunger, unemployment in both urban and rural settings, helps in showcasing talent through various creative activities, innovation and changes in the lifestyle of common man, encourage taking risks and ensure growth and participation in nation building through economic activities and help in raising living standards of the people. Logendran (2016) who studied the impact of entrepreneurship business skills guidance in Jaffna using questionnaire on 60 employees found out that business skills contributed towards the exploit of SMEs. Mohammed and Nzelibe (2014) investigated entrepreneurial skills and profitability of SMEs. The results of their study showed that entrepreneurial skills propel record keeping, access to financing, concessional taxation, longer period of operation and consistent policies. Abdullahi and Kaplan (2017) appraised entrepreneurial uniqueness and competencies as determinants of corporate performance and found that entrepreneurial characteristics and entrepreneurial competencies are positively connected to overall business performance.

Similarly, Akeke, Oche, Akuegwu, Ushie, (2022) examined entrepreneurial skills for business education graduates' employability in Cross River State, Nigeria and found that skill acquisition reduces the high level of rural-urban migration, offer functional culture that enable people to be self-employed and self- reliant, provide youth with adequate expertise that enable them to be more creative and innovative in identifying noble business opportunities. Shika (2017) examined entrepreneurial capabilities and the performance of

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small and medium enterprises (SMEs) Kaduna State, Nigeria. Their result showed that entrepreneurial competencies have positive impact on the performance of enterprises.

Statement of the problem

It has been observed that majority of the students still find it very difficult and impracticable to find their feet on ground as business initiators or as recruits managing entities to a strong better arrangement. The continued high level of unemployed is a sign that the alumnae are not doing a good job in the field of job creation and expansion of enterprises. The unrelenting lack of skill of the graduates in Nigeria go with several unfavorable penalties to the country and its national, some of which are already being experienced while others may show up if the problem persists. For instance, it has been detected that the inability of graduates to perform to the anticipation has added to the high labor turnover in Nigeria, it has also been liable for low wages in many Nigerian corporations, both private and public, lowered organization profitability, through bringing in uncalled for or if not would be avoidable costs, such as incessant recruitment costs, venture in current workers development, market losses and could imply a greater workload and anxiety on those personnel who can execute. Despite all these concerns, there are no studies to address the extent to which developing entrepreneurial skills in students in the era of persistent economic crisis in Nigeria visa vis has imparted relevant skills needed for job creation or job market.

Objectives of the study

i) Ascertain the components of entrepreneurial skills the students' graduates need in the era of persistent economic crisis in Kano state, Nigeria.
ii) Ascertain the ways entrepreneurial skills can be used by students' graduates to manage their business in the era of persistent economic crisis era of persistent economic crisis in Kano state, Nigeria.

Research Question

i) What are the components of entrepreneurial skills needed by students in the era of persistent economic crisis in Kano state, Nigeria?
ii) What are the ways entrepreneurial skills can be used by student's graduates to manage their business in the era of persistent economic crisis in Kano state, Nigeria?

Research Methods

The research design adopted for this study is the descriptive survey research design due to the nature of the study, which is primarily concerned with identifying and categorizing the skills set needed by the students for performance in an enterprise either as employee or owner. The population included 1550 of vocational education graduates who run their small businesses around three federal institutions in Kano state namely: Bayero University Kano, Federal College of Education Kano and Federal College of Education Technical Bichi. Sample of 150 small businesses were randomly selected. The instrument that was used for collecting relevant data for this study was questionnaire titled "Developing Entrepreneurial Skills in Students in the Era of persistent economic crisis in Kano state, Nigeria" and was developed by the researchers. The instrument was validated by three experts in business management and entrepreneurial studies and the reliability established through Crombach Alpha which yielded an index of 0.72. Mean and standard deviation were used to analyze and answer the two research questions. Based on a four-point rating scale, the total weighted frequencies were used to determine the mean for each item. The decision rule for the mean level was 2.50

therefore, items which had scores 2.50 and above showed acceptance while mean scores below 2.50 showed non- acceptance.

Findings

Research question one: What are the components of entrepreneurial skills needed by students in the era of persistent economic crisis in Kano state, Nigeria?

Table 1: Mean score rating for components of entrepreneurial skills needed by students in the era of persistent economic crisis in Kano state, Nigeria

Entrepreneurial skills components required to run business as owner/employee in the enterprise	Mean	Std. Deviation	Decision
Business management skill	3.42	.81	Agreed
Resource mobilization skill	3.46	.64	Agreed
Setting targets skill	3.52	1.00	Agreed
Customer service skill	3.32	.95	Agreed
Team work and leadership skill	3.36	.74	Agreed
Communication and listening skill	3.74	.68	Agreed
Financial prudency skill	3.59	.77	Agreed
Innovation/creativity skill	3.56	.98	Agreed
Emotional control skill	3.39	.97	Agreed
Decision making skill	3.62	.94	Agreed
Motivating skill	3.29	.73	Agreed
Keeping record skill	3.40	.75	Agreed
Negotiation skill	3.51	.90	Agreed
Sales techniques skill	3.31	.80	Agreed
Capture, maintain and retain customers skill	3.38	1.11	Agreed
Market research skill	3.20	1.03	Agreed
Determine demand and supply skill	3.80	.88	Agreed
Make good and services available skill	3.61	.90	Agreed
Determine competitor's strength and weakness skill	3.25	.89	Agreed
Aggregate mean average	3.46	0.87	Agreed

Data on Table 1 presents the mean score rating and standard deviation of components of entrepreneurial skills needed to manage business in the era of persistent economic crisis in Kano state Nigeria.

The respondents agreed on all the items with high mean scores greater than the criterion mean score of 2.50. It is clear from the table that the higher the mean score the lower the standard deviation; and the lower the mean score, the higher the standard deviation. The aggregate mean scores average of 3.46 on the components of entrepreneurial skills show that all the respondents agreed to the items presented in the above table. Therefore the entrepreneurial skills components needed by students to run their business after graduation in Kano state, Nigeria during the era of persistent economic crisis include: business management skill, resource mobilization skill, setting targets skill, customer service skill, team work and leadership skill, communication and listening skill, financial prudency skill, innovation/creativity skill, emotional control skill, decision making skill, motivating skill, keeping record skill, negotiation skill, sales techniques skill, capture, maintain and retain customers skill, market research skill, skill for determining demand and supply, skill for making good and services available and skill for determining competitor's strength and weakness.

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Research question two: What are the ways entrepreneurial skills can be used by student's graduates to manage their business in the era of persistent economic crisis in Kano state, Nigeria?

Table 2: Mean score rating for the ways entrepreneurial skills can be used by student's graduates to manage their businesses in the era of persistent economic crisis in Kano state, Nigeria

Ways entrepreneurial skills can be used by student's graduates to manage their businesses in the era of persistent economic crisis in Kano state, Nigeria	Mean	SD	Decision
managing and taking risk in business activities	3.16	.81	Agreed
mobilizing resource both human and material in the business	3.12	.81	Agreed
setting targets in the business	3.18	1.10	Agreed
carrying out customer service in the business	2.74	1.14	Agreed
working as a team with other owners' leadership in the business	2.96	.80	Agreed
communicating and listening to customers and colleagues	2.81	.76	Agreed
managing finance in the business	2.76	.99	Agreed
innovating/creating new products	3.12	.91	Agreed
controlling emotion while carrying out business	2.86	1.14	Agreed
taking decision in carrying out business activities	3.19	.94	Agreed
motivating and persuading customers and employees	3.48	.93	Agreed
keeping record of goods, services and accounts	3.04	.74	Agreed
negotiating price in buying and selling	3.63	.83	Agreed
carrying out sales with different techniques	3.36	.81	Agreed
capturing, maintaining and retaining customers	3.42	.99	Agreed
carrying out market research	3.10	.86	Agreed
determining demand and supply accordingly(business opportunities)	3.16	1.11	Agreed
making good and services available to customers	3.31	.85	Agreed
determining competitor's strength and weakness	3.54	.71	Agreed
Aggregate mean average	3.15	0.91	Agreed

Findings from Table 2, indicates that all the mean scores of respondents on the ways entrepreneurial skills acquired by business operators can be used in their business activities are above 2.50. Hence, the mean scores of entrepreneurial skills for carrying out business activities in era of persistent economic crisis in Nigeria ranges from 2.74 – 3.63 with average mean score of 3.15 which is also above 2.50 criterion mean. This implies that during the era of persistent economic crisis in Nigeria, entrepreneurial skills are needed to keep the students' graduates' owners and administrators of small businesses abreast with activities.

Discussion of findings

The findings of the study based on research question 1 revealed that, the entrepreneurial skills components needed by colleges and universities vocational students to enable them carry out business activities after graduating as owners or employed were business management skill, resource mobilization skill, setting targets skill, customer service skill, team work and leadership skill, communication and listening skill. Others skills included were financial prudency, innovation/creativity, emotional control, decision making, motivating and keeping record. Negotiation skill, sales techniques skill, capture, maintain and retain customer's skill, market research skill, skills to determine demand and supply, make good and services

available, and determine competitor's strength and weakness were also among the skill set. This agreed with the findings of Dauda and Muhammad (2019) that, entrepreneurial skills include: managerial or administrative skills, job/technical skills, human relations skills, innovative/enterprising skills, competitive skills, communication skills, conceptual/planning skills, supervisory/guidance skills, accordance skills and investigation/problem solving skills. Also the study concurred with that of Egele (2018) who found that entrepreneurial skills are opportunity alertness, innovation, creativity, ability to interpret successful entrepreneurial role models and risk taking. Accordingly, the present study is in conformity with Ngerem, and Ezikpe, (2016) who revealed that financial management skill, risk taking skill, communication skill, and human relations skill among others are entrepreneurial skills required for economic development and empowering of youths.

Based on research question 2, the finding of study equally revealed the ways in which entrepreneurial skills acquired by student's graduates in colleges and universities to manage their businesses in the era of persistent economic crisis in Nigeria to include: managing and taking risk in business activities, mobilizing resource both human and material in the business, setting targets in the business, carrying out customer service in the business, working as a team with other owners' leadership in the business, communicating and listening to customers and colleagues, managing finance in the business, innovating/creating new products, controlling emotion while carrying out business and taking decision in carrying out business activities. Other ways to practice entrepreneurial skills acquired according to the respondents are motivating and persuading customers and employees, keeping record of goods, services and accounts, negotiating price in buying and selling, carrying out sales with different techniques, capturing, maintaining and retaining customers, carrying out market research, determining demand and supply accordingly, making good and services available to customers and determining competitor's strength and weakness. His study is in line with the findings of Mohammed and Nzelibe (2014), they stated that entrepreneurial skills propel record keeping, access to financing, concessional taxation, longer period of operation and consistent policies. Also in agreement, the findings concurred with Sharma and Sharma (2020) that skill development in economy of a country helps in showcasing talent through various creative activities like innovation and encouragement to take risks and ensure growth. This study finding is also consistent with Akeke, et al (2022) who stated that entrepreneurial skills acquired helps innovating/creating new products and determining demand and supply accordingly (business opportunities).

Conclusion

Within the limit of the findings of this investigation, it is concluded that, entrepreneurial skills development during the era of persistent economic crisis are needed to keep the students' graduate's owners and administrators of small businesses abreast with production activities.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were proffered:

1. Educational policy makers should inspire entrepreneurial skills development by enriching and stimulating deserved students to obtain more training apart from the ones taught in the Universities and colleges.
2. The Universities and colleges should enrich the skills by adding more refresher courses related to the necessary skills in order to update students' abilities and also maintain regularly and frequently training so that the students will be more up-to-date using skills/abilities which will continue to influence positively on them while carrying business activities either as owners or employed.

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