



Strategies for Fostering Creativity Among Business Education Graduates in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This study was designed to find out the strategies for fostering creativity among business education graduates in Nigeria. The instrument that was used to collect the data for this study was a questionnaire. The study sample comprised all the 71 Business Education lecturers in the universities and colleges of Education in Edo and Delta states in the South-South geo-political zone of Nigeria. Mean, standard deviation and t-test were the statistical tools used for the analysis of data. The findings of the study reveal that the respondents agreed that the 20 creativity skill-items are needed by business education graduates. Furthermore, the study also show a no significant difference between the mean rating of opinion of male and female business educators on the strategies for fostering creativity among business education graduates in Nigeria. Finally, some recommendations that are likely to enable both the pre-service and in-service business education graduates acquire relevant creativity skills designed to make them useful to themselves and the society at large have been proffered.

Keywords: Strategies, Creativity, Business Education Programme, Graduate Employment.

INTRODUCTION

Education has been generally accepted as a veritable tool for economic and industrial development of any nation. The achievement of the right to education requires that young people should be given the opportunities necessary for the acquisition of the knowledge, skills, and attitude and values which enable them to lead happy, productive lives as individual and

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discharge their social and economic responsibility for the improvement of their life in the society.

In Nigeria, unemployment has become a serious issue which the federal government is tackling through its current Transformation Agenda. As each year runs to an end with its attendant graduation of students at all levels of education, the fear is that unemployment rate which is already sourly high, will increase. The 1996 UNDP report described youths in developing nations to be the hardest hit by unemployment. To take years to search for job after graduation is a common occurrence in most developing countries of the world. This has become a serious threat to the Nigeria economy with its attendant social problems of armed robbery, youth restiveness, pipeline vandalisation, prostitution and female trafficking that have reached some alarming heights.

The country's educational goals have been set out in terms of their relevance to the needs of the individual and those of the society, to align with the realities of our environment and the modern world. The national goals of Nigeria, which have been endorsed as the necessary foundation for the national policy on education amongst others, are the building of: (a) a united, strong self-reliant nation; (b) a great and dynamic nation, and (c) a land full of bright opportunities for all citizens. The need for functional education for the promotion of a progressive and united Nigeria is believed to be the nation's philosophy of education. In view of this, the quality of instruction at all levels has to be oriented towards inculcating in part, the acquisition of competencies necessary for self-reliance (FRN, 2004). According to the education policy (FRN, 2004), business education is considered as a veritable tool for preparing students for the enterprise as employees, employers, entrepreneurs and to be self-employed.

Business education is an aspect of educational programme offered at the higher institution of learning which prepare students for careers in business (Azuka, 2003). According to Osuala (2003), business education is a training system that encourages the beneficiary to acquire skills that fits into the world of work. Nwosu (1999) describes business education as "education for and about business", whose purpose is to prepare individuals for gainful employment or for self-employment. Whether paid or self-employment, the emphasis is on exposure to, and acquisition of knowledge, skills and attitudes relevant and adequate for employment in specific business occupations.

The National Business Education Association (1995) amongst others, recommends that on successful completion of her programme, business education graduates should be able to (i) function as economically literate citizens through the development of personal consumer economic skills, and an understanding of business operations; (ii) demonstrate interpersonal, teamwork, and leadership skills necessary to function in multicultural business settings; (iii) develop career awareness and related skills to enable them to make viable career choices and become employable in a variety of

business careers; and (iv) select and apply the tools of technology as they relate to personal and business decision making. Nigeria's philosophy of education is based on the development of the individual into a sound and effective citizenship. The national education goals, which derive from the philosophy, include the acquisition of appropriate skills and the development of mental, physical and social abilities and competencies as equipment for the individual to live in and contribute to the development of his society (FRN, 2004), implies the need for creativity and innovation. Furthermore, the quality of education, it can be argued, should not only be gauged in terms of academic achievement, but also in terms of students' ability to produce original, insightful ideas. While schools tend to prize the ability to memorize and analyze material, creativity plays a crucial but largely underestimated role in personal and social development, including economic development of societies in the future.

Creativity is a mental and social process involving the generation of new ideas or concepts. Creativity can be defined as the capacity to produce novel, original work that fits within task constraints (Lubart, Mouchiroud, Tordjman & Zenasni, 2003). These novel ideas can be caused by a need or by insight and beneficial to an individual, team or organization. According to the multivariate approach, creativity depends on cognitive, conative, and environmental factors that combine interactively (Amabile, 1996; Lubart et al., 2003). Each of the factors underlying creativity develops during childhood. A psychodynamic approach to understanding creativity was proposed by Sigmund Freud, who suggested that creativity arises as a result of frustrated desires for fame, fortune, and love, with the energy that was previously tied up in frustration and emotional tension in the neurosis being sublimated into creative activity.

One of the key influences on creative development is the physical and social environment of the child, comprising the family, school, and societal spheres. The family environment may provide cognitive (e.g., intellectual stimulation) and affective (e.g., emotional security) support for creativity as well as providing the physical setting in which a child grows (Harrington, Block & Block, 1987). For example, families that provide stimulating settings with many books, magazines and cultural activities tend to foster creative thinking (Simonton, 1984). Carl (1954) suggested that a warm, secure family will serve as a base from which creative work can be attempted. In addition to the family setting, the school environment plays a crucial role in the development of creativity, or its lack of development in many cases. Daniel (2005) posits that we are entering a new age where creativity is becoming increasingly important and that there is the need to foster and encourage right-directed thinking (representing creativity and emotion) over left-directed thinking (representing logical, analytical thought). Craft (2002) stated the objectives of creativity amongst others, to include the development of: (a) awareness and understanding of their own thinking process and those

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of others; and (b) abilities to integrate critical and creative thinking into central learning, communication and problem-solving processes.

However, Tucker (1994), Nwazuoke (2003) and Gboyega (2003) posited that the factors affecting creativity amongst others include (i) peoples' resistance to change; (ii) inadequacy of entrepreneurial content in the curriculum; (iii) challenges posed by ICT; (iv) inconsistency in the academic calendar; and (vi) inadequacy of instructional facilities.

Statement of the Problem

The national policy on education (FRN, 2004) states that education is a veritable tool for effecting both national and economic growth for her citizenry. In this regard business education, a programme of instruction that prepares the beneficiary with necessary competencies that can enable the graduates, in the absence of paid employment, is fundamentally required. In this disposition, business education programme equips her graduates with the right creative skills that enable them to engage in a life of work as well as for self-employment after graduation from the training institutions. In line with this aspiration, one may not be able to say how effective the business education programme has been in fostering creativity thinking in the graduates for the needed entrepreneurship development in Nigeria. In actual terms, the concern of these researchers was to establish the views of educators on fostering creativity among business education graduates.

Purpose of the Study

This study has been designed to find the views of educators on the strategies for fostering creativity among business education graduates in Nigeria. The specific purposes of the study are to find out:

- (1) the strategies for fostering creativity among business education graduates; and
- (2) whether there is a significant difference in the mean ratings of the views of male and female business educators on the strategies for fostering creativity among business education graduates in Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research question was used to provide answer to the study:
what are the strategies for fostering creativity among business education graduates?

One hypothesis was tested: there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of the views of male and female business educators on the strategies for fostering creativity among business education graduates in Nigeria.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The research design for this study was descriptive survey of the strategies for fostering creativity among business education graduates in Nigeria.

Population and Sample of the Study

The population for this study consisted of all the 74 lecturers in the Business Education departments in the 4 universities and 5 colleges of Education in Edo and Delta States of southern Nigeria where the programme is run. The entire population formed the sample owing to the smallness of the size.

Data Instrumentation, Collection and Analysis

The instrument used for this study was the questionnaire titled: “Fostering Creativity among Business Education Graduates”. The instrument was made up of a 20-item questionnaire derived from the literature reviewed which sought to know the strategies for fostering creativity among business education graduates. In the questionnaire, respondents were asked to rate each of the items on a four-point scale as follows: Strongly Agree (SA) 4; Agree (A) 3; Disagree (D) 2; and Strongly Disagree (SD) 1. A pilot-group of 10 business education lecturers within the target group was arranged for deriving the reliability for the instrument. The split-half method using the Spearman’s Brown Prophecy formula was used to correlate the data generated which yielded a reliability index of 0.85. The researchers administered the questionnaire with a research assistant who was specifically instructed on the manner in which the instrument had to be administered including handling and returning techniques of the completed questionnaires within 2 weeks of administration. On the whole, 71 questionnaires that formed 96% return rate, (comprising 39 males and 32 females) was obtained and used to carry out the analysis. The data gathered from the study were analysed using the mean (X), standard deviation (SD) and t-test statistics. For the Research Question, the decision rule was 2.5 while the null hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance.

RESULTS

Research Question 1: what are the strategies for fostering creativity among business education graduates?

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Table 1: Mean Responses and standard deviation scores on fostering creativity among business education graduates.

Fostering Creativity- Educators should:	X_m	SD_m	X_f	SD_f	X_g	t-cal	Remarks
1. encourage independent learning	1.28	0.62	1.58	0.41	2.86	1.28	Needed
2. have a team teaching-style	1.27	0.54	1.57	0.39	2.84	1.04	Needed
3. motivate students to learn the facts in order to have a solid base for divergent thinking	1.99	0.49	0.63	0.73	2.62	0.36	Needed
4. encourage flexible thinking	1.20	0.99	1.58	0.79	2.78	1.28	Needed
5. delay judging students' ideas until they have been fully considered	1.00	0.57	1.74	0.52	2.74	0.76	Needed
6. promote self-evaluation of ideas	1.59	0.85	1.24	0.18	2.83	0.49	Needed
7. take students' questions and suggestions seriously.	1.20	0.49	1.69	1.03	2.89	1.68	Needed
8. integrate assessment into classroom teaching.	1.10	1.07	1.70	0.39	2.80	0.52	Needed
9. offer opportunities to work with a variety of materials in varied conditions	1.30	0.49	1.48	0.41	2.78	0.47	Needed
10. help students to cope with frustration and failure in order to build the courage to pursue new ideas.	1.31	0.88	0.62	1.03	2.53	1.23	Needed
11. keep a close watch on the personality development of each student.	1.07	0.75	1.60	0.14	2.67	0.73	Needed
12. provide an environment that specifically values creative thinking and recognizes it in students.	1.56	1.04	1.06	0.42	2.62	0.40	Needed
13. encourage students to appreciate and imbibe the general aspect of ICT	1.09	0.66	1.75	0.92	2.84	0.11	Needed
14. teach that problem might have many different interpretations and solutions.	1.90	1.08	1.00	0.66	2.90	1.22	Needed
15. stress discovery and exploration for students	1.81	0.72	1.00	0.52	2.81	0.32	Needed
16. develop students to question, challenge and think divergently	1.65	0.91	1.04	0.71	2.69	0.71	Needed
17. make creativity worthwhile by providing positive consequences such as recognition and rewards.	1.21	1.01	1.61	0.64	2.82	1.06	Needed
18. offer appropriate career counseling	1.05	0.93	1.70	1.03	2.75	0.93	Needed
19. apply learner-friendly instructional strategy	1.08	1.05	1.72	0.59	2.80	1.26	Needed
20. enhance entrepreneurial content in business education	1.09	0.72	1.69	0.58	2.78	1.42	Needed

X_m = Mean scores of male lecturers; SD_m = Standard Deviation of male lecturers
 X_f = Mean scores of female lecturers; SD_f = Standard Deviation of female lecturers
 X_g = Grand mean; t-cal = calculated t-tests; Table t = 1.96;
 $P = 0.05$; $DF = \text{degree of freedom (70)}$
 $N_m = \text{Number of male lecturers (39)}$; $N_f = \text{Number of female lecturers (32)}$.

In response to research question 1, Table 1 shows that the respondents agreed that the 20 identified statements are necessary foundation for fostering creativity among business education graduates for effective participation in

the economic activities of the nation. In other words, the respondents agreed that the items are required with scores ranging from 2.53 to 2.90.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of the views of male and female business educators on the strategies for fostering creativity among business education graduates in Nigeria.

Table 1 also show that the calculated t-test value of 0.86 is less than the criterion figure of 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance to accept the null hypothesis of no significant difference. This in other words means that the views of both the males and female business educators on the strategies for fostering creativity among business education graduates in Nigeria are basically the same.

DISCUSSION

The development of entrepreneurship competencies will include: nurturing in the business education students those personal qualities that confronts risks and inadequacies. When this attitude is promoted in business education programme, it becomes an active way of learning instead of simply absorbing knowledge (European Confederation of Junior enterprise, 2004). This view supports Ojo and Uwameiye (2005) who stated that entrepreneurs are not born but nurtured. With such early exposure to creativity thinking activities, the youths and business education graduates develop a mind set for creating jobs instead of seeking for the non-existent jobs. This implies that the teachers need to be educated to understand creative development and ways in which creativity can be fostered or inhibited by school practices (Lynch, & Harris, 2001). The teachers also need to be sensitised to creativity issues that are rarely part of their teacher training or priorities. Amabile (1996) argued that to enhance creativity in business, three components were needed: (i) expertise (technical, procedural and intellectual knowledge); (ii) creative thinking skills (how flexibly and imaginatively people approach problems); and (iii) motivation (especially intrinsic motivation). According to Nickerson (1999) and Fasko (2002) a summary of the various strategies for fostering creativity by both academia and industry include: (a) establishing purpose and intention; (b) building basic skills; (c) encouraging acquisitions of domain-specific knowledge; (d) stimulating and rewarding curiosity and exploration; (e) building motivation, especially internal motivation; (f) encouraging confidence and a willingness to take risks; (g) focusing on mastery and self-competition; (h) promoting supportable beliefs about creativity; (i) providing opportunities for choice and discovery; (j) developing self-management (metacognitive skills); (k) teaching techniques and strategies for facilitating creative performance; and (l) providing balance.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

Arising from above findings, the following suggestions are proffered:

1. The need to redesign business education curriculum to incorporate the modern skill required for effective performance in the workplace in an information and communication technology (ICT) age. The curriculum should be revisited to include both creative and innovative skills.
2. There is the urgent need for the creation of positive awareness in developing creativity competency culture among the Nigerian youths and graduates.
3. Government should grant soft loans to the business education graduates to enable them establish their various businesses as a way of tackling the unemployment problem as well as creating the enabling environment that is favourable for developing and sustaining creativity.
4. Business education graduates should be encouraged to actively participate in professional seminars, workshops and conferences.
5. Exercises can be provided to foster directly the development of the cognitive and conative factors involved in creativity (such as generic divergent thinking ability, risk taking tendencies, etc.).

The philosophy of Nigerian education reveals that the main aim borders around the achievement of an egalitarian, strong and self-reliant nation through the transformation of the individual into an autonomous, independent being with decision-making power (FRN, 2004). The need for the development of creativity competencies through business education programme is very important so that products of business education programmes will be able to function effectively in the world of work. The business education graduates' awareness and abilities to integrate critical and creative thinking into central learning, communication and problem-solving processes is a major route to solving the problems of prevailing youth restiveness and graduate unemployment in Nigeria.

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