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TECHNICAL SKILLS AMONG SMALL-SCALE ENTREPRENEURS IN KAMPALA UGANDA

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ABSTRACT

Utilizing the ex post facto, prospective comparative designs, purposive and stratified random sampling by proportional allocation, this investigation studied 386 small-scale entrepreneurs (SSEs) in Kampala Uganda in these aspects: (1) extent of technical skills possessed and (2) differences in extent of technical skills possessed in terms of gender. The data were elicited using a validated and tested for reliability questionnaire and revealed the following results: the technical skills (mean=3.29; ts=5.401) were moderately possessed; the extent of technical skills possessed differed significantly according to gender (male more than female). Anchored on these findings, the technical skills needed to be more promoted through education and training of small scale entrepreneurs in business skills, legal aspects of the business, marketing and time management.

Keywords: *Small scale entrepreneurs; technical skills*

1. Introduction

Entrepreneurs today are viewed not only as business founders but more importantly as those who can invent new ways of managing ventures so that they become more competitive and more successful. Owners of existing organizations are also struggling to make their organizations more entrepreneurial (Brown, et al, 2001), strategic and competitive (Hitt et al, 2001). The need then for the businesses to be managed technically becomes paramount. This has its origin from the fact that the issue of initiation of businesses (whether by entrepreneurs or none) is no longer a problem, since very many people have started; instead the problem is on the survival, productivity, growth and performance of these created ventures. It is important to look at different ways of boosting the performance of these mushrooming enterprises to contribute to national development by taking into considerations their management skills. One type of management skills which is almost a must for all businesses to survive global competition is technical skills, which pertain to how different products are made within the required standards and quality. Technical skills are particularly important for small-scale entrepreneurs (enterprises) to enable them adapt quickly to changing market needs. While technical skills are generally a constraint among most small-scale entrepreneurs globally, the extent to which they are constrained differs across countries and therefore the approach to provide solutions may also differ. To identify the needs, priority areas and solutions with reference to constraints in technical skills under the Ugandan context, this empirical investigation delved into the extent to which the technical skills were possessed by the small scale entrepreneurs under study and hypothesized that gender, educational level and business form may account for significant differences in technical skills.

2. Review of Related Literature

2.1 Skills

Zuzana and Matej (2007) defined a skill as the ability to smoothly carry out one's roles or activities involving ideas (cognitive skills), things (technical) and people (interpersonal). For Wickham (2001), a skill is knowledge that is demonstrable by action and ability to perform in a particular way. In a similar fashion, the UK Department of Education defines skills broadly as the ability to perform tasks according to a pre-defined standard of competence (cited in Tustin, 2003). While Al-Madhoun and Analoui (2002), considered a skill as an ability which can be developed and which is manifested in performance, not merely in potential but the ability to translate knowledge into practice. Whereas skills are of different types and uses, this study examined managerial skills required in managing businesses of a small size.

2.1.1 Technical Skills

Technical skills refer to one's ability to understand and the proficiency in a specific kind of activity, particularly one involving methods, processes, procedures, or techniques; it involves specialized knowledge, analytical ability within that specialty and ability using tools and techniques of a specific discipline (Katz in Arul, 2009). Vocational and on-job training programs largely do a good job in developing this skill. According to George and Jones (2001) technical skills refer to job specific knowledge and techniques required to perform a role. They depend on the nature of the organisation and task. For example, the owner of a restaurant needs cooking skills, a school director needs teaching skills and so on. In case of any problem, the entrepreneur can fill the gap or identify it. They also help evaluate performance of delegated workers. Other technical skills entrepreneurs need are accounting, book-keeping and budgeting.

Technical skills according to Kunene (2008) are also called vocational skills and refer to those specific skills needed to work within a specific occupation and include expertise, knowledge of the industry, its standards and practices, ability to use tools, procedures and techniques of a specified field, understanding of how specific things work, product/ service specific knowledge that enables one to know what a particular product could do and what it can be used for, process knowledge or how to manufacture relevant products and all steps that need to be taken to develop and produce products or perform tasks necessary to render the service (Tustin, 2003; Perks & Struwig, 2005). Examples of technical skills required by SSEs are those related to job specific knowledge and include professional skills, marketing skills, bookkeeping skills, budgeting skills, time management skills and legal skills (Zuzana & Matej, 2007).

A. Professional Skills

Professional skills, also called technical or operational skills (Mullins, 2002) are trained abilities that enable a practitioner to perform specific tasks with particular instructions, standards, methods and tools (Bevan, 2002). Having some business training (professional skills) can enhance small-scale entrepreneurs' business management success. Entrepreneurs who are professionals in their business fields have higher chances of performing better than those who are not (Zuzana & Matej, 2007). Bekele and Worku (2008) found out that shortage of professional skills was responsible for about 49% failure of small-scale firms in Ethiopia.

Raduan et al. (2006) found the same in Malaysia, Audretsch and Lehman (2004), Baghai et al. (1999), Smith and Schallenkamp (2005) supplemented these findings, while Chandler and Jansen (1992) argued that as small ventures grow, founding entrepreneurs should be replaced by professional managers. On the other hand, Carol Yen-Yun Lin (1998) concluded that professional skills are critical for short term not long term survival, arguing that in the long run, professional skills need to be supplemented by other management skills, such as motivation, delegation and teamwork. The findings of Davila et al (2003) suggested that professional/or technical skills are a prerequisite to identification of an appropriate opportunity and pursuing it successfully.

B. Marketing Skills

Marketing skills are theorized to have a positive relationship with business management success (Kotler, 1983:6). Schultz and Robinson (1986) showed that Nelson Company's effective marketing strategy increased its sales, profitability and competitiveness in the late 1970's. Marketing skills help to improve product quality and increase customer satisfaction which culminates into increased sales and profits (Price & Ferrell, 2005). Mayanja (2001) noted that only 29% in a sample of 123 self-employed technicians in Kampala, Uganda had sound marketing skills and out of these, 58% were more successful. He also indicated that the other important factor in marketing skills is product pricing. The skills part here is on how to set competitive prices, but which enable a company to make some reasonable profits. Ligthelm and Cant (2002) had also discovered that inappropriate pricing negatively affected the performance of a business venture. Kiwanuka (1998) contends that entrepreneurs who are competitive aggressive, are more likely to succeed than those who are less. Lumpkin and Dess (1996), define competitive aggressiveness as the ability of entrepreneurs to directly and intensely challenge own competitors through cutting prices, spending aggressively on promotions, product or service quality and adopt new competitive marketing strategies all the time. Marketing skills enable an entrepreneur to analyze market opportunities, select target markets, develop marketing mix, identify new markets and customers (through cutting prices, increase advertisement budgets, improving advert message, getting more dealers, review demographic, institutional and geographical markets, change product by size, new packaging, launch new products etc.) and manage the marketing effort, that enhance survival, increase sales and venture profitability. The report of Mezher et al (2008) unearthed internal factors explaining success and failure among small-scale entrepreneurs in Lebanon, indicating that poor product quality is among the most important failure factors. Price and Ferrell (2005) also observed that product quality was a prerequisite for entrepreneurs to enter the market and it was a vital aspect of marketing. In view of this, Nieuwenhuizen and Kroon (2003) agreed with Rogerson (2000a) that technical knowledge is a key factor affecting successful business performance. Cornwall and Naughton (2003) confirmed that entrepreneurs who are incompetent in technical skills cannot be able to create excellent products.

C. Bookkeeping Skills

Bookkeeping refers to a system of recording financial transactions regarding sales, purchases, incomes and payments (Accounting SAGE, 2009). In organizations then, bookkeeping skills therefore refer to the ability of a manager or an entrepreneur to properly record financial transactions regarding sales, purchases, incomes and payments in the organization. Several studies have shown the importance of records management skills in a business (Australian Government, 2009; Bell et al, 2008; Linda & Jerry, 1993). In most of these studies, it had been indicated that records management skills help to monitor business health, make vital decisions, manage cash flows and show business financial position to lenders. Bekele and Worku (2008) found that failure to demonstrate standard bookkeeping, auditing and record keeping skills accounted for 54% failure in micro, small and medium enterprises in Ethiopia.

D. Budgeting Skills

Budgeting skills refer to the ability of a business manager to establish and manage budgets that requires some knowledge or skills of finance and accounting principles (Accounting SAGE, 2009). Important in this skill area is the ability to perform cost estimates for project budgeting and understanding the different methods used to determine business costs (Sharpiro, 2001). Such skills range from estimating individual activities and rolling the estimates up to estimating the business cost. Reading and understanding vendor quotes, preparing or overseeing purchase orders, and reconciling invoices are budgeting skills that will be used by a business manager in most entrepreneurial ventures. These costs will be linked back to venture activities and expense items in the budget. Budgeting skills enhance entrepreneurs' ability of setting performance standards, motivate towards goals, metering results and direct attention to more essential areas (Narasimham, 2009). Other studies in this line include Smith and Schallenkamp (2006), Jukes and Bruce (2007), Schallenkamp (2008), Thwala and Mvubu (2008) and Spellman (2009).

E. Time Management Skills

Time management skills thus refer to the ability to know what to do, when and actually do it (Raftorpoulos et al., 2009). Since time is a scarce resource, it is important that small-scale entrepreneurs spend it wisely, as it is irreplaceable, irreversible and for this matter, the business man's proverb "time is money" stands (Inyang & Enuoh, 2009). Since time is money, anybody who does not properly manage it is bound to, not only lose money but also fail in business. Time management skills increase effectiveness, improve performance and lead to personal development (Sandberg, 2004; Raftorpoulos et al., 2009). Time management skills are crucial for identifying timely market opportunities. In Kampala and Uganda in general several businesses are immensely affected by time and seasons, such that untimely planning may significantly and adversely affect the sales.

F. Legal skills

Legal skills according to Kunene (2008); Finch and Fafinski (2007) and Botha (2006) encompass ability to deal with business forms, contractual laws, business ethics, ability to register trademarks, logos, designs and

acquiring licenses. Several researches identify legal skills to be a possible factor affecting entrepreneurial survival and growth; for example, Kunene (2008) found that legal skills enhance success of small and medium enterprises in South Africa; Tobias et al. (2008) showed that legal requirements was among the barriers to entrepreneurial growth internationally; Botha (2006) asserted that without legal skills the business may collapse; Tumbunan (2009) found that legal issues are a vital constraint to women entrepreneurs in Indonesia, however Bushe (2007) and Svensson (2008) did not find a significant correlation between the two.

3. Methods and Techniques

This study employed a retrospective-prospective and descriptive comparative survey designs. Data on technical skills possessed were collected by asking individual small business owners and managers to rate themselves on validated researcher devised questionnaire items. The technical skills questionnaire was factor analyzed and Cronbach alpha coefficients were computed using SPSS. The results revealed that all items in the instrument had higher variances which were at least above 50%, indicating that the items were valid in explaining the constructs in the instrument. Results also indicated that the instrument had a high degree of reliability ($0.899 > 0.7$). From a total of 11003, 386 small-scale entrepreneurs, the respondents were selected using purposive and stratified random sampling techniques. Mean ratings were computed for each item and compared with respect to gender, business form and level of education using One Way ANOVA.

4. Findings and Interpretations

4.1 Technical Skills Possessed by Small-scale Entrepreneurs in Kampala

Entrepreneurs' technical skills were measured using six components namely; I) marketing skills; II) book keeping skills; III) budgeting skills; IV) time management skills; V) legal skills; and VI) professional skills. For each of these six concepts, entrepreneurs were asked a number of questions related to the concept and they were required to rate themselves on the extent to which they possessed each, on a scale of five points, where 1 represented very little or no skill at all and 5 for very much skills. Their ratings were analyzed using means descriptive statistics as indicated in table 1.

Table 1: Means and Standard Deviations on Extent to Which Technical Skills were possessed by Small-scale Entrepreneurs in Kampala

Types of Technical Skills	Mean	SD	t	Interpretation	R a n k
1. Marketing skills					
Ability to apply competitive strategies (e.g. cutting prices, improve quality, design new products, packages etc, fashion, color, etc.)	3.38	0.800	4.225	Moderate	1
Ability to develop a marketing budget	3.34	0.866	3.857	Moderate	2
Ability to identify new markets and/or customers	3.17	0.879	3.606	Moderate	3
Ability to respond quickly to competitive forces.	3.16	0.834	3.789	Moderate	4
Ability to satisfy customer needs	3.13	0.809	3.869	Moderate	5
Ability to identify customer needs	3.13	0.809	3.869	Moderate	5
Ability to identify competitors' strength and weaknesses	3.12	0.886	3.521	Moderate	7
Average mean	3.21	0.660	4.864	Moderate	
2.Book keeping skills					
Ability to prepare financial documents (cash books, petty books, journals, ledgers & bank reconciliations)	3.37	2.416	1.395	Moderate	1
Ability to manage cash flows (income & expenditure)	3.21	0.847	3.790	Moderate	2
Ability to audit & understand business financial position	3.21	0.824	3.896	Moderate	2
Average mean	3.26	1.074	3.035	Moderate	
3.Budgeting skills					
Ability to set performance goals and standards	3.46	0.980	3.531	High	1
Ability to evaluate results basing on budgetary goals	3.27	0.835	3.916	Moderate	2
Ability to prioritize according to goals and objectives	3.26	0.800	4.075	Moderate	3
Average mean	3.33	0.762	4.370	Moderate	
4. Time management skills					
Ability to time table tasks and activities (determine what activity to do & when)	3.37	0.824	4.090	Moderate	1
Ability to apply time saving measures (e.g. quick decision making, clear delegation)	3.21	0.781	4.110	Moderate	2
Ability to meet deadlines and appointments.	3.14	0.826	3.801	Moderate	3
Average mean	3.24	0.687	4.716	Moderate	

5. Legal skills					
Ability to understand rights & consumer protection law	3.25	0.938	3.465	Moderate	1
Ability to deal with business legal forms, contracts & laws	3.18	0.943	3.372	Moderate	2
Ability to register business trademarks & acquire licenses	3.13	1.025	3.054	Moderate	3
Average mean	3.19	0.790	4.038	Moderate	
6. Professional Skills					
You have adequate training in line with this business	3.66	1.057	3.463	High	1
You have adequate qualifications in line with the business you are doing	3.41	1.206	2.828	High	2
You have ever worked in a similar business related to the one you currently own	3.40	1.128	3.014	Moderate	3
Average mean	3.49	0.879	3.970	High	
Overall mean	3.29	0.611	5.385	Moderate	

Entrepreneurs in Kampala were found to possess a relatively moderate level of technical skills, but with high professional skills and low legal skills. The problem of inadequate technical skills has been documented in many parts of the world. For example, Kunene (2008) noted inadequate technical skills among small and medium entrepreneurs in South Africa. The same results were earlier revealed by Botha (2006), Berreira (2004) and Bosma et al. (2000).

Basil (2005) found low levels of records or bookkeeping skills in Nigeria. He also found an inadequacy in other aspects of technical skills such as professionalism (where many Smallscale entrepreneurs are lacking relevant training in their fields of operation), financial or budgeting skills, marketing and legal skills. While this problem has been well documented, Bosma et al (2000) showed that financial management skills are a necessity for entrepreneurial success and unfortunately they found them inadequate among small scale ventures in Netherlands, explaining their low level of success. This (and other similar ones) implies that the level of technical skills required for small-scale entrepreneurs success should be beyond moderate, an indication that the level of technical skills for small-scale entrepreneurs in Kampala is still below the required level for business venture success.

4.2 Differences in Technical Skills Possessed by Male and Female Small-scale Entrepreneurs in Kampala

As indicated in Table 2, the following types of technical skills significantly differed between male and female entrepreneurs with male entrepreneurs dominating in all the skills in question; i) Budgeting skills ($t=3.455$, $\text{sig.}=0.001$); ii) Time management skills ($t=3.391$, $\text{sig.}=0.001$); iii) Legal skills ($t=4.202$, $\text{sig.}=0.000$); iv) professional skills ($t=3.002$, $\text{sig.}=0.000$); the overall technical skills significantly differed ($t=3.944$, $\text{sig.}=0.000$).

Table 2:T-test results for Differences in Technical Skills Possessed by Male and Female Small-scale Entrepreneurs

Types of Technical Skills	sex	Mean	t- value	Sig.	Interpretation	Decision on H ₀
1. Marketing Skills	Male	3.27	1.860	0.064	No significant difference	Accepted
	Female	3.13				
2. Bookkeeping Skills	Male	3.31	1.262	0.208	No significant difference	Accepted
	Female	3.19				
3. Budgeting Skills	Male	3.45	3.455	0.001	Significant difference	Rejected
	Female	3.17				
4. Time Mgt Skills	Male	3.34	3.391	0.001	Significant difference	Rejected
	Female	3.10				
5. Legal Skills	Male	3.34	4.202	0.000	Significant difference	Rejected
	Female	2.98				
6. Professional Skills	Male	3.61	3.002	0.003	Significant difference	Rejected
	Female	3.33				
7. Technical Skills	Male	3.41	3.944	0.000	Significant difference	Rejected
	Female	3.15				
Overall Technical Skills	Male	3.41	3.944	0.000	Significant difference	Rejected
	Female	3.15				

The findings revealed that men possessed technical skills more than women. Men usually acquire more education than women; they tend to go in for more specialized courses, where such skills are trained and acquired. Similarly, men tend to take part in business related activities and get experience required to do a particular job compared to women. Tajaddini et al (2011) indicated that men have significantly higher levels of technical skills than women in Iran, while Kaifi and Mujtaba (2010a) found the same in Afghanistan and similar results were found in India, USA and UK (Kaifi & Mujtaba, 2011). Similar reasons were given in almost all these studies explaining differences according to gender, suggesting that there is need for women entrepreneurs in Uganda to go for more education.

In many parts of the world (Uganda inclusive), various socioeconomic factors are responsible for women's lower educational and managerial skills attainment, including direct costs, the need for female labor, low expected returns and social restrictions (Ghosh & Bharati, 2005). Such differences explain differences in managerial skills possessed which are critical in effective management of a business venture. Further, shared values tend to regularize human behavior and make individuals more predictable. A study by Munene et al (2000) concluded that the African and Asian cultures tend to emphasize hierarchy, paternalism, and mastery

in contrast to egalitarianism, autonomy and harmony. As a matter of fact, the position of women in traditional African societies can be measured by their autonomy in decision making and by the degree of access they have to the outside world (Ghosh & Bharati, 2005). Moreover, Asian and African managers often stress reliance on formal rules and superiors in reaching decisions as compared with the cultural profile of people in the United States or most European countries (Kaifi & Mujtaba, 2011).

4. Conclusions

Kampala SSEs have moderate technical skills. Most small-scale entrepreneurs in Kampala are professionals in their business fields, however, the business technical skills are still missing. Business technical skills are very vital if the venture is to succeed, therefore, other technical business skills should be harnessed like business legal matters (business registration, acquiring licenses and dealing with agreements and contracts), marketing (how to identify competitors' strengths and weaknesses, identifying and satisfying customer needs, quick response to competitive forces and identifying new markets), time management and bookkeeping.

5. Recommendations

There is need for the Government of Uganda to promote more women entrepreneurs in Kampala, in order to promote gender equality in business and economic growth. This study found that men dominate women in ownership of small-scale enterprises. There is need to educate small-scale entrepreneurs in Kampala on formation of joint ventures as well as trainings in these areas: (1) legal aspects of their business, more especially on business registration procedures and how to deal with business legal forms, contracts and laws; for example they need to be taught on how to formulate partnerships and joint stock companies, how to develop and design legal documents like partnership deeds, articles and memorandum of associations; (2) time management such as on how to meet deadlines and appointments; (3) marketing in the angle of how to identify their competitors' strengths and weaknesses, customer needs and how to satisfy them. Special entrepreneurial training sessions for women on the basics of business such as how to make business plans, how to make departments and how to delegate effectively, are also recommended; more skills on how to register businesses and acquiring licenses; more time management skills such as how to fulfill schedules, meeting deadlines and appointments and applying time saving measures. Women entrepreneurs' associations should help women by highlighting the procedures of registering a business, printing them on posters and the like.

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TRANSFORMING TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT: EXPERIMENTAL

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ABSTRACT

This study discusses the concept of transforming training as a unique management system. It also traces its root to the evolution of psychology and education in the 1990s. The study also conceptualizes transforming training in some diverse ways. It argues that for a healthy and smooth running of a system of administration, there is need for transforming training. Therefore, it sees transformation as a necessary tool of national development and stability. The study adopts transformative learning theory which says that the process of perspective transformation has three dimensions: psychological (changes in understanding of the self), convictional (revision of belief systems), and behavioral (changes in lifestyle). The methodology adopted for these researchwork is via context analysis. It is therefore concluded that organizations are been plugged by the efforts of individuals in transforming training in order to bridge this gap in the chain of events. The concept of experimental approach as an aspect of educational psychology formally surfaced in the study.

Keywords: Training, transformation, experimental, approach, development.

Introduction

In the past decades, new generation of scholars, many of whom have carved out an independent practice which have challenged the dominant ideology thereby offering alternative experience namely; visual, demonstrative, illustrative, helpful, and spatial. However, since 2000, their exploratory practices are described as experimental approach (Guaghui Ding, 2014). Abhijit V. Banerjee and Esther Duflo (2009) maintain that the past few years have seen a veritable explosion of randomised experiments in development. By 2008, a large conference in development was attended by researchers from all walks of life. Inger Maren Rivrud et'al (2016) affirm that experimental approach shows investigation, quality, elevation and movement distance. They also argue that the concept is a unique management system. However, (David Mackey and Sian Livsey, 2006) the cry from many organisations that have cut their training provision for core workplace skills is that if they train employees they will only leave to join competitors is arguably justifiable. Companies argue that they will not waste money on training when they can recruit from a competitor by offering more benefits. Thus, the result, a few years on, is that there is an acute shortage for all organisations and for some trades the pool of some skilled workers is becoming smaller and smaller. Large gaps in organisations are been plugged by the efforts of individuals in transforming training in order to bridge this gap in the chain of events. The concept of experimental approach as an aspect of educational psychology formally surfaced in the classical study of Thorndike and Woodworth on transfer (Cronbach, 1957). The experimenter's interest in the effect of environmental change, referred to as "treatments", demanded designs using standardised procedures to hold all conditions constant except the independent experimental variable. It has a long tradition in psychology and education. When psychology emerged as an infant science during the 1990s, it modeled its approach methods on the established approaches of the physical sciences, which for centuries relied on experimental approaches was strengthened by behavioral approaches to psychology and education predominated during the first half of the century. Thus, usage of experimentation in education psychology over the past 40 years has been influenced by developments in theory and research practices

disciplines (Steven M. Ross and Gary R. Morrison).

Literature review

Transforming Training is a Registered Training Organization (RTO) under the Australian Skills Quality Authority. It also employs dedicated and skilled trainers with total commitment to provide training for adults and school students. The aim is to equip learners with the skills, knowledge and attributes that are needed for life and for the workplace through the provision of nationally recognized qualifications. Business Dictionary sees the concept of transforming training in an organizational context. It views it as a process of profound and radical change that orients an organization in a new direction and takes it to an entirely different level of effectiveness. Unlike the turnaround which implies incremental progress on the same plane. It also involves a basic change of character or little or no resemblance with the past configuration or structure. According to S Chandra (1997), management of the organization firmly believes that human assets unlike other asset cannot be depreciated and must necessarily be appreciated over entire tenure. Therefore training is regarded as investment and not a cost. Even long-term intangible gains such as attitude change, are to be considered as valuable returns. Training is considered as vehicle for effective communication and coordination. Training is catalytic in any man management matrix for cohesiveness, compatibility, and cooperation in every organizational endeavour. Management proclaims Training & Development direction as permanent part & parcel of operational process and not some experiment in isolation. Management is fully committed to lend its total support to training tasks and is dedicated through intense involvement in every phase of this activity.

According to Wayne F Cascio (1995), Training consists of planned programme designed to improve performance at the individual, group, and /or organizational levels. Improved performance, in turn, implies that there have been measurable changes in knowledge, skills attitude, and/or social behavior. Training is considered as a tool for HRD. Training has immense potential in transfer and utilization of latest technical know-how, leadership development, organization of people, formation of self-help-groups, mobilization of people as well as resources, empowerment of resource-poor rural mass, entrepreneurship development, etc., which are considered essential components of HRD. According to C B Memoria (2000), Training is a process of learning a sequence of programmed behavior. It is application of knowledge and it attempts to improve the performance of employee on the current job and prepares them for the intended job. Training is a short term process utilizing a systematic and organized procedure by which non managerial personnel acquire technical knowledge and skills for a definite purpose. Training refers to instructions in technical and mechanical operations, like operation of some machine/equipment. Training is for a specific job related purpose. Herbert H. Bell and Charles M. Reigeluth (2014) describe training as a big enterprise. These authors also see it as an activity tailored to meet individuals needs whenever they are and wherever they are ready to learn. According to them, today information technology creates the opportunity for individuals to acquire knowledge and skills from multiple sources. These sources include peers, mentors and traditionally

structured environments as well as evolving sources, such as social media, mobile devices and other electronic means that allow on demand access to information and experts who address specific questions and problems. However, it is important to recall that, training (for instance, job training or skill training) provides the basic knowledge and skills for any individual; it advances competencies and develops experts. The concept of training is not without limitations. One of the impediments is that training requires resources, money, time and manpower in order to translate into effectiveness and reality. David Mackey and Sian Livsey (2006) affirm that the concept of transforming training is the structured programme of training normally provided off the job in an establishment, Centre or training room designed or designated specifically for training. The training may be delivered in-house by the organization's own trainers by external providers. Alternatively, the training may be delivered in a location to the organization. For instance, a tutorial is most likely to occur in distance/open learning when there is a guided programme of study and learners need to gain feedback on the assignments. Bill Strickland (1999), a social entrepreneur sees transformation as an art of modeling people or apprentices to learn craft skills. He also points out that the key to transforming peoples is treating them with respect. Besides, he further illustrates that, there is nothing wrong with poor people except that they have no money and they cannot do something about it. In other words, there is nothing wrong with these people. According to him, "I want to be a symbol of transformation and stability, to build an institution not just run a programme, because most things associated with community are temporary. They come and go, I wanted to build something that had a long history". This work is very important in the context of this study because it is all encompasses as it admits that transformation as an approach goes with training. In the same vein, it explains the quest to change from the old self. Donald H. Rumsfeld (2002) views transformation as an unending process. He also sees the concept as an event that is not static. In other words, it is ongoing process. For instance, there is no point one can say one is transformed. The writer uses September eleventh tragic drama in the U.S. to cry home his point. According to him, "our challenge in the twenty first century is to defend our cities, friends, allies, space among others. Our goal is not simply to fight and win wars; it is to prevent them. In order to do so, we must as a matter of urgency 'transform', we must find ways to influence the decision-making to potential adversaries to deter them not only from using existing weapons but also transform to detect the looming dangers and threats. This study is of immense benefit to our study because it sees transformation as a catalyst to development. According to Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (2014), the concept of transforming is seen as the holistic process or approach which adds significantly to the unprepared trainees, students, old or adult, young or teenager, apprentices and all other learners. In the context of this study, the institute agrees that there were hitherto two sets of developments which one calls for transformation. For instance, the change call is occasioned by the existing status quo. Danielle Lake, Michael E. Ricco and Judy Whipps (2016) assert that transformation is an innovative, accelerated and hybrid model. They further agree that the concept incorporates a wide range of high-impact practices focused on developing the skills of leaders and employers. They also argue that it integrates practices from motivational and experimental

learning, community-based issue among others. This article is relevant for educators and administrators hoping to catalyzing a means of innovative co-participatory engagement projects that will engage with the needs of surrounding community in a format supportive of nontraditional learners. Partners' Training for Transformation is a learning process for community leaders and others interested in social transformation, based on the workshops developed by Anne Hope and Sally Tummel in Africa. Training for Transformation is about learning about transforming ourselves, our communities and our society into sources of justice and equality. The programme is an immersion in participative and experiential learning. The programme aims to explore the development of community by creating a temporary learning community in the group itself. This affords participants a real-time experience of community building, informed by pieces of theory and opportunities to apply the workshop learning to real life. According to HR Advisor, employee training and learning have been moving away from the traditional classroom approach for a while now, yet LinkedIn's 2017 Workplace Learning Report reveals that instructor-led classes in an in-person classroom setting remains the number one way employees are trained. Seventy-eight percent of learning and development professionals surveyed say they use classroom training. However, mobile training often is more practical than classroom training, too. Employees can tap in when they need information and are best positioned to absorb it. The rising interest in mobile training is closely tied to the growing demand for self-service training (also known as on-demand or participant-led training). "What makes the concept of 'self-serve' relevant today is that now, more than ever, people want to drive their own employee experience," writes Jennifer Miller on her The People Equation blog. "From Bring Your Own Device to Work plans, to choosing à la carte employee benefits, today's employees demand to participate more fully in their work experience."

UNESCO in the paper titled "building peace in the minds of men and women" maintain that transforming learning and training environments concerns not only managing physical facilities more sustainably, but also changing the ethos and governance structure of the whole institution. The priority calls for promoting whole-institution approaches to ESD in schools and all other learning and training settings. It is the dedicated learning and training concept geared toward the broader community. Institutional leaders are prompted to take a holistic view of this concept, focused not only on transferring content about sustainable development, but also on participating in sustainable development practices, including taking actions to reduce the institution's ecological footprint. Collaboration between the learning and training institution and the host community is important. This international body agrees that main stakeholders in this Priority Action Area are the leaders and the managers of all types of learning and training institutions such as school principals, directors of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) centers, presidents of universities and community colleges as well as those of private companies. Community leaders, parents, learners and trainees are important partners for these main stakeholders.

Theoretical framework

This study will adopt transformative learning theory which says that the process of perspective transformation has three dimensions: psychological (changes in understanding of the self), convictional

(revision of belief systems), and behavioral (changes in lifestyle). This theory was promulgated by Mezirow (1978). The transformative learning is the expansion of consciousness through the transformation of basic worldview and specific capacities of the self; transformative learning is facilitated through consciously directed processes such as appreciatively accessing and receiving the symbolic contents of the unconscious and critically analyzing underlying premises. Jack Mezirow (1978) believes that it usually results from a disorienting dilemma which is triggered by a life crisis or major life transition. Thus, it may also result from an accumulation of transformations in meaning schemes over a period of time. Less dramatic predicaments, such as those created by a teacher, also promote transformation. An important part of transformative learning is for individuals to change their frames of reference by critically reflecting on their assumptions and beliefs and consciously making and implementing plans that bring about new ways of defining their worlds. This process is fundamentally rational and analytical Jack Mezirow (1978) developed transformative learning theory starting in 1978. Since then, the theory has evolved “into a comprehensive and complex description of how learners construe, validate, and reformulate the meaning of their experience.” For learners to change their meaning schemes (specific beliefs, attitudes, and emotional reactions), “they must engage in critical reflection on their experiences, which in turn leads to a perspective transformation.” The meaning schemes that make up meaning structures may change as an individual adds to or integrates ideas within an existing scheme and, in fact, this transformation of meaning schemes occurs routinely through learning. Achieving meaning and balance in life is a learning task that underpins Mezirow’s theory of transformative learning that is based on findings from evaluation studies at Teachers College (Baumgartner, 2012) during the 1970s. His work builds on that of

Tough, Knowles, Blumer, Kelly and Bruner but mostly on Dewey, Freire and in particular Jürgen Habermas. The theory develops from an interest in ‘developing a research based body of theory indigenous to adult education and of practical utility to practitioners’ (Mezirow, 1970, p. 1). Mezirow proposes social justice and change as an aim of adult education. Though this is not always explicit in his work those who worked with him confirm this (Fleming, Marsick, Kasl and Rose, 2016, p. 1). This chapter tracks the links between Mezirow’s work and critical theory with the intent of linking transformation theory with critical theory. A defining condition of being human is that we have to understand the meaning of our experience. For some, any uncritically assimilated explanation by an authority figure will suffice. But in contemporary societies we must learn to make our own interpretations rather than act on the purposes, beliefs, judgments, and feelings of others. Facilitating such understandings is the cardinal goal of adult education. Transformative learning develops autonomous thinking.

Other perspectives

In the latter two perspectives, including Mezirow’s psychocritical view, the unit of analysis is the individual, with little consideration given to the role of context and social change in the transformative experience. On the other hand, a third alternative perspective, a social emancipatory view, in a small way starts to address

these concerns. Rooted primarily in the work of Freire (1984), this perspective is about developing an “ontological vocation” (p. 12), a theory of existence that views people as subjects, not objects, who are constantly reflecting and acting on the transformation of their world so it can become a more equitable place for all to live. Its goal is social transformation by de-mythicizing reality, where the oppressed develop a critical consciousness. In addition to the previously discussed views, four additional views of transformative learning (neurobiological, cultural-spiritual, race-centric, planetary) have lately emerged in the field. Most recent is the neurobiological perspective of transformative learning (Janik, 2005). This “brain-based” theory was discovered by clinicians using medical imaging techniques to study brain functions of patients who were recovering from psychological trauma. What these researchers determined was that a neurobiological transformation is seen as invoking “the parasympathetic branch of the autonomic nervous system, and the hypothalamic-pituitary pitocin secreting endocrine system to alter learning during periods of search and discovery” (Janik, 2007, p. 12). In simpler terms, the findings suggest that the brain structure actually changes during the learning process. These findings in turn bring into question traditional models of learning (behaviorism, cognitivism, constructivism) and instead offer a distinctive neurobiological, physically based pathway to transformative learning. From this perspective, learning is seen as “volitional, curiosity-based, discovery-driven, and mentor-assisted” and most effective at higher cognitive levels (Janik, 2005, p. 144). Furthermore, a neurobiological approach suggests that transformative learning (1) requires discomfort prior to discovery; (2) is rooted in students’ experiences, needs, and interests; (3) is strengthened by emotive, sensory, and kinesthetic experiences; (4) appreciates differences in learning between males and females, and (5) demands that educators acquire an understanding of a unique discourse and knowledge base of neurobiological systems. A number of critical responses to Mezirow's theory of transformative learning have emerged over the years. One criticism of Mezirow's theory is its emphasis upon rationality. Some studies support Mezirow. Others conclude that Mezirow grants rational critical reflection too much importance. Edward W. Taylor (2011) has since suggested neurobiological research as a promising area that may offer some explanation about the role emotions play, closing the gap between rationality and emotion in the transformative learning process. Taylor implies that, with available modern technology such as magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) and positron emission tomography (PET), these once obscure factors can now be examined through determining which neurological brain systems are at work during disorienting dilemmas and the journey of recovery that follows. This neurobiological research also stresses the importance of the role of implicit memory, from which emerge habits, attitudes and preferences that are related to unconscious thoughts and actions. While the learning process is certainly rational on some levels, it is also a profound experience that can be described as a spiritual or emotional transformation as well. The experience of undoing racist, sexist and other oppressive attitudes can be painful and emotional, as these attitudes have often been developed as ways to cope with and make sense of the world. This type of learning requires taking risks, and a willingness to be vulnerable and have one's attitudes and assumptions challenged. Other theorists have proposed a view of transformative learning as an intuitive and emotional process. John M. Dirkx,

Robert D. Boyd, J. Gordon Myers, and Rosemary R. Ruether link Mezirow's rational, cognitive and analytical approach to a more intuitive, creative and holistic view of transformative learning. This view of transformative learning is based primarily on the work of Robert Boyd, who has developed a theory of transformative education based on analytical (or depth) psychology. According to Boyd, transformation is a “fundamental change in one's personality involving (together) the resolution of a personal dilemma and the expansion of consciousness resulting in greater personality integration.” This calls upon extra-rational sources such as symbols, images, and archetypes to assist in creating a personal vision or meaning of what it means to be human. To bring the reader up to date, in the previous edition of this volume (Merriam, 2001), there were three alternative perspectives discussed in contrast to Mezirow's psychocritical perspective of transformative learning: psychoanalytic, psychodevelopmental, and social emancipatory. A psycho-analytic view of transformative learning is seen as a process of individuation, a lifelong journey of coming to understand oneself through reflecting on the psychic structures (ego, shadow, persona, collective unconscious, and soon) that make up an individual's identity. Individuation involves discovery of new talents, a sense of empowerment and confidence, a deeper understanding of one's inner self, and a greater sense of self-responsibility (Boyd and Meyers, 1988; Cranton, 2000; Dirkx, 2000). A psychodevelopmental view of transformative learning is a view across the lifespan, reflecting continuous, incremental, and progressive growth. Central to this view of transformation is epistemological change (change in how we make meaning), not just change in behavioral repertoire or quantity of knowledge. In addition, there is appreciation for the role of relationships, personal contextual influences, and holistic ways of knowing in transformative learning, that have been often overlooked in Mezirow's rational emphasis on transformation (Daloiz, 1986; Kegan, 1994). Key differences exist among the various views of transformative learning. Beginning with the goal of transformation, one of the most fundamental differences is that of personal or emancipatory transformation (self-actualization to planetary consciousness). Related to this difference is the emphasis on individual or social change. Those views that are more rooted in the individual (psychocritical, psychoanalytic, psychodevelopmental, neurobiological) give little attention to context and social change and their relationship to transformation. Where the individual and society are seen as one and the same (emancipatory, race-centric, cultural-spiritual), transformative learning is as much about social change as individual transformation. Another difference is the role of culture in transformative learning. The more psychologically centered models (psychoanalytic, psychodevelopmental, psychocritical, neurobiological) tend to reflect a more universal view of learning, with little appreciation for the role of social or cultural differences. On the other hand, those views that recognize difference (social emancipatory, culturally relevant narrative, race-centric, and planetary) place much greater emphasis on positionality (where one's “position” is relative to race, class, gender, sexual orientation) and its relationship to both the process and the practice of transformative learning.

Conclusion

Transformative learning theory continues to be a growing area of study of adult learning and has significant implications for the practice of teaching adults. The growth is so significant that it seems to have replaced andragogy as the dominant educational philosophy of adult education, offering teaching practices grounded in empirical research and supported by sound theoretical assumptions. Also, as previously discussed, there is the emerging presence of alternative conceptions of transformative learning, challenging scholars and educators to look beyond transformative learning as defined by Mezirow. These alternative perspectives offer fresh insights and encourage greater research in the area of transformative learning. Despite the growth in understanding transformative learning, there is still much not known about the practice of transformative learning in the classroom. One area in particular is the student's role in fostering transformative learning. What are the student's responsibilities in relationship to the transformative educator? Second, there is a need to understand the peripheral consequences of fostering transformative learning in the classroom. For example, how does a student's transformation affect peers in the class room, the teacher, the educational institution, and other individuals who play a significant role in the life of the student? Furthermore, there is little known about the impact of fostering transformative learning on learner outcomes (grades, test scores). Definitive support is needed if educators are going to recognize fostering transformative learning as a worthwhile teaching approach with adult learners. Transformative learning is first and foremost about training from a particular worldview, a particular training philosophy. It is also not an easy way to train. Wearing the title, or moniker, of a transformative trainee "should not be taken lightly or without considerable personal reflection. Although the rewards may be great for both the trainer and the trainee, it demands a great deal of work, skill, and courage" (Taylor, 2006, p. 92). It means asking yourself, Am I willing to transform in the process of helping my staff to transform? This means taking the position that without developing a deeper awareness of our own frames of reference and how they shape practice, there is little likelihood that we can foster change in others.

The study concludes that the concept of transforming training remains a big enterprise and unending process. It submits that it is a process of profound and radical change that orients an organization in a new direction and takes it to an entirely different level of effectiveness. The study also admits that the concept of transforming is seen as the holistic process or approach which adds significantly to the unprepared trainees, students, old or adult, young or teenager, apprentices and all other learners.

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EVALUATION OF UNIVERSITY GRADUATE EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS COMPETENCE IN NORTH-WEST, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

One of the challenges facing university graduates is unemployability. This is because university graduates have generally been described as poorly-trained and are deficient in employability skills. Thus, this study evaluated university graduate employability skills competence in North-west, Nigeria. The objectives of the study were to examine graduates' employability competence in communication, basic computer, analytical, entrepreneurial and interpersonal skills. A descriptive (survey) research design was adopted for the study. Purposive sampling technique was used to select four states for the study. Purposive sampling technique was used to select 306 out of 1,212 top management staff from educational, commercial, science and technology industries in the Selected States (Zamfara, Jigawa, Katsina and Kaduna). The instrument used for the study was a validated researcherdesigned questionnaire with a test re-test reliability index of 0.89. Descriptive statistic of mean score was used to answer the research questions. The findings of the study revealed that the employability skills competence of university graduates in communication, analytical and entrepreneurial skills were low with mean scores of 1.86, 1.81 and 1.71, respectively; while basic computer and interpersonal skills were moderate (mean scores = 2.18 and 2.12, respectively). This study concluded that university graduates' employability skills competence level in North-west was low and the implication of this is that the Nigerian universities needed to focus more on developing graduates' employability skills. This study recommended that more emphasis should be placed on the employability skills competence of graduates and the curricular content of every area of specialisation should be reviewed to be more activitybased in meeting the skills required by employers of labour.

Keywords: Competence, employability, graduates, skills, university.

Introduction

Throughout the world, interest and investment in the university education is a basic segment of national growth effort. Nations today depend on information and capacities that are made in universities (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, OECD, 1996; World Bank, 1997). Being the nation's knowledge industry, the university builds the progressive capacity of the labour force. In the advanced countries, for instance, university's researchers screen ecumenical technological patterns, overview their significance to national needs and contribute to developing the national inventive capacity for economic advancement. As a result of the globalisation, information advancement and upset in the present-day learning-based economy, so much values have been set on universities in making, outfitting and disseminating information for sustainable development and improved way of life. Consequently, the university is a vital tool in engendering the human capacities for specialised activities. Categorically, universities are saddled with the obligation of training high-level manpower within the setting of the needs and aspirations of the nation. Tertiary education in Nigeria (universities, polytechnics, colleges of education and mono technics) has been approved as a means of training human capital required for sustainable development.

The goals of the university education, as stated by the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2014), are to:

- i. contribute to national development through high level manpower training;
- ii. provide open and moderate quality learning opportunities in formal and casual training in the light of the needs and interests of all Nigerians;
- iii. provide high quality career counselling and long lasting learning programmes that prepare students with the information and aptitudes for self-dependence and the world of work;
- iv. reduce aptitude deficiencies through the development of skilled manpower relevant to the necessities of the labour market;
- v. advance and provide grant, entrepreneurship and community service;
- vi. forge and bond national unity and
- vii. promote national and international understanding and cooperation (p. 39).

Regardless of these noble goals, Sofoluwe and Etejere (2011) noticed that over the years the tertiary scholastic level has attracted underwhelming reactions, having fall short of providing the kind of education that would solve the problems of the country as a developing nation; such problems as abject poverty, corruption, unemployment and mismanagement of resources. This is traceable to the difficulties confronting the university education in Nigeria which are poor infrastructure, political influence, incessant industrial actions and underfunding. The issue of underfunding of education is so endemic that it has now encompassed series of other problems which include shortage of human and material assets (Durosaro, 2000). Other challenges are cultism, examination malpractices and poor quality of graduates.

Nigerian graduates have been depicted differently as half-baked, ill-equipped, illtrained, of poor quality, of a low standard and unemployable (Obayan, 2002). This clarified why the university education in Nigeria has not been able to consummate its mandate of endangering the high-level manpower needed for the national development in the required quality that can fit and compete favourably both at local and world labour markets. Be that as it may, the recent perception is that the university education ought to develop in the recipient a certain number of employability aptitudes to a specific measure that will confirm the sustained ingenious efficiency of the individual. These skills, according to Obayan (2002), include:

- i. analytical power; this entails higher capacity for logical thinking, using right verbal, audio-visual, quantitative, sensory perceptions, graphic, documentary and other various tools.
- ii. communication; this includes oral and written as well as (in other possible forms) using the appropriate language and non-verbal forms in particular situations to attain specific goals.
- iii. problem-solving; refers to task one's analytical power to the peak in developing possible solution paths to the problem in a variety of situations.
- iv. team spirit; is working together with others in one form of group activities or another to get out of one's

shell while remaining oneself.

v. creativity; refers to the capacity to think ahead of the well-trodden path in reasoning as well as in action.

vi. life-long learning skills; include perseverance, risk bearing, enquiry, reading habit, self-directed coordinated endeavour, the capacity to confront difficulties and so on (p. 4).

As reported by Oyesiku (2010), over the past seven years, the nation's capacity for job creation was low at an annual rate of five percent and seven percent. In the interim, about 213 tertiary institutions (Universities, Polytechnics and Colleges of Education) in the country then produced over 300,000 graduates annually; a number that should usually meet the nation's human capital resource assets, however, employers are increasingly finding it difficult to attract skilled workers to fill the job vacancies. Federal Office of Statistics (2012) also reported that with the current unemployment rate at 23.9 percent and unemployed youth population put at 20.3 million, Nigeria produced about 4.5 million new entrants annually into the labour market.

Therefore, the Nigerian society today is facing challenges of getting the education that will deliver to the students the right set of skills and knowledge demanded by the labour market. The reality on the ground is that the university education should turn out students who are competent enough to fill available jobs in the marketplace. The National Universities Commission (2004) affirmed that the state of unemployment of Nigerian university graduates in the country is attributable to the disequilibrium between labour market requirements and essential employable skills by the graduates. However, contention subsists regarding what exactly constitutes what employers are requiring from graduates in the labour market. It was against this background that the researcher was interested in investigating the relationship between labour market core skills requirements and university graduate soft skills competence to identify the level of employability in North-west, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

The trend of graduate unemployability has become an issue in the Nigeria labour market, especially for stakeholders like employers of labour, training institutions, parents and graduates. The Nigerian Employers Consultative Association (NECA) (2005) expressed that companies were not recruiting but adopting employment protection strategies due to the very poor quality graduates who do not meet demands of captains of industries. Therefore, Chiacha and Amaechi (2013) carried out a study on entrepreneurship education and graduate employability in Nigeria. They discovered that the entrepreneurial education offered in schools did not lead to high employability index of graduates. Also, Pitan and Adedeji (2012) investigated the problem of skills mismatch and its prevalence in the Nigeria labour market.

The study discovered that university graduates were not adequately competent in the skill demand of the labour market. The National Bureau of Statistics (2011) reported that the rate of unemployment in Nigeria was high. The report revealed that the North-west recorded highest rate of unemployment with 25.40%, followed by South-west with 21.56%, North-east with 16.47%, South-south was 12.03%, while North-

central had the lowest with 11.60%. This situation became more alarming in the third quarter of 2014 where North-west recorded 30.0%, Northeast 23.9%, North-central 15.1%, South-east 8.9%, South-west 8.9% and South-south 18.7% (Ajaikaye, 2016).

The issue of unemployment is traceable to the employability knowledge-skill gap in the requirements of employers of labour from graduates. This gap, Kayode (2009) expressed, is responsible for the massive unemployment of graduates. Other researchers such as Dabalen, Oni and Adekola (2000), Mora (2008), Ajayi, Adeniji and Adu (2008), Pitan and Adededeji (2012) and Philips Consulting (2014). have carried out some researches on graduates' employability skills, unemployment, entrepreneurial human capital development, economic future of Nigerian graduates and labour market prospects of university graduates in Nigeria but the gap identified by the researcher was that none of these mentioned researchers among others focused on labour market core skills requirements and university graduate soft skills competence for a relationship test in North-west geo-political zone of Nigeria. The researcher, therefore, considered it highly essential to investigate labour market core skills requirements and university graduate soft skills competence in North-west, Nigeria.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to evaluate the university graduate employability skills competence in North-west, Nigeria. However, the specific purposes of the study were to:

1. assess the competence level of university graduate communication skills in North-west, Nigeria;
2. examine the competence level of university graduate basic computer skills in North-west, Nigeria;
3. determine the competence level of university graduate analytical skills in North-west, Nigeria;
4. examine the competence level of university graduate entrepreneurial skills in North-west, Nigeria and
5. examine the competence level of university graduate interpersonal skills in North-west, Nigeria

Research Hypotheses

The following research questions were raised to guide the study:

1. what is the competence level of university graduate communication skills in North-west, Nigeria?
2. what is the competence level of university graduate basic computer skills in North-west, Nigeria?
3. what is the competence level of university graduate analytical skills in North-west, Nigeria?
4. what is the competence level of university graduate entrepreneurial skills in North-west, Nigeria?
5. what is the competence level of university graduate interpersonal skills in North-west, Nigeria?

Theoretical Framework

This study adopted suitable theory to explain certain existing graduate employability skills competence. The theory used in this study is the Human Capital Development Theory. Human Capital Development Theory.

Human Capital Development Theory

Human capital theory was propounded by Schultz in 1963. As an economic theory, its assumption is premised on the supposition that education or training enhances the efficiency of workers and useful life skills of the people, all things being equal. The notion of human capital first emerged post-World War II when it was advanced that investments in health, training and education could explain levels of economic growth that investment in physical capital could not (Becker, 1963). One of the proponents of this theory, Becker believed that the height of workforce generation has positive relationship with the educational and training structure in which the higher the education and training a man gets, the higher the efficiency or achievements of an individual.

Therefore, the major task in the process of human capital development is to provide the educational system that would meet the changing labour market requirements so that the educational system would be able to produce labour force corresponding to the needs of the future economy development tendencies and orientation towards knowledge-based economy.

This theory is very important and relevant to the current situation of developing nations like Nigeria where demand for labour is low due to the belief of some employers of labour that graduates are poorly trained and unemployable because they could not meet up with labour market requirements. Therefore, human capital development theory provides the premise upon which this study sought to evaluate university graduate employability skills in Northwest, Nigeria. This theory is very important and relevant to the current situation of developing nations like Nigeria where demand for labour is low due to the belief of some employers of labour that some graduates are poorly trained and unemployable because they could not meet up with labour market requirements due to soft skills mismatch.

Methodology

Research Design

The research design for this study was a descriptive (survey) study. Best and Kahn (2005) maintained that correlational research design is an approach that seeks to establish relationship between two or more complex variables on the basis of the predictions made. Baba (2005) explained that this type of research design is used where the researcher studies the subjects at one time or within a specified period of time. Therefore, the correlational research design was considered appropriate and adopted to describe the university graduate employability skills competence as it existed in the North-west, Nigeria. Also, it allowed the researcher to make a careful collection of data in such a way that the information obtained from the representative sample of the target population was analysed for generalisation.

Population, Sample and Sampling Techniques

The population for this study comprised Top Management Staff (TMS) in various institutions and

organisations in North-west, Nigeria. The target population for the study consisted of 1,212 top management staff in Education, Banking, Commerce, Manufacturing, Science and Technology industries in the North-west, Nigeria (Field work, 2016). The top management staff in this study were directors at State Basic Education Boards (SUBEBs), Teachers' Service Commission (TESCOM), States Ministry of Education, registrars in tertiary institutions (universities, polytechnics and colleges of education) in the four selected states, bank managers, banks' heads of departments (operation and marketing), heads of departments (administrative, human resource, production and marketing) in commerce and industry as well as science and technology organisations. The selection of these management staff was based on the reason that they are operational managers who evaluate and assess university graduates who work directly under them.

The four states selected for the study were Zamfara, Jigawa, Kaduna and Katsina States. These states were selected for the study in the North-west zone because they recorded highest rates of unemployment: Zamfara: 42.6%, Jigawa, 35.9%, Kaduna, 30.3% and Katsina, 28.1% (Ajaikaye, 2016). The sample for the study comprised 306 top management staff members which were selected through the Research Advisors (2006) at 95% confidence level of 5.0% margin of error to determine the sample size of 306.

The sampling techniques used to select the sample for the study were the random and purposive sampling techniques. The simple random sampling technique was used (through balloting) to select seven banks out of 25 banks in the North-west, Nigeria. The technique was also used to select four different organisations. Also, the purposive sampling technique was used to select the participants (top management staff members). This is because they are definite in number and as part of their responsibility, they perform the functions assessment and evaluation of university graduates working in their various organisations and institutions. This is as presented in Table 1:

Table 1 Sample Distribution of Participants

Industries	Population	Sample	Sampling Techniques
Banking	525	84	Purposive Sampling Technique
Commerce and Industries	224	64	Purposive Sampling Technique
Science and Technology	217	64	Purposive Sampling Technique
Education			
TESCOM	35	20	Purposive Sampling Technique
SUBEB	28	16	Purposive Sampling Technique
MOE			
Directors	45	9 TMS	Purposive Sampling Technique
Supervisors	104	25	Purposive Sampling Technique
Tertiary Institutions	24	24	Purposive Sampling Technique
		TMS	Purposive Sampling Technique
TOTAL	1212	306	
		TMS	

Instrumentation

The instrument used for the study was a researcher-designed questionnaire titled “ University Graduate Employability Skills Competence Questionnaire (UGESCQ)” consisted of 25 items drawn from the research questions raised for the study. In order to ensure the validity of the research instrument, copies of the draft of the instrument were given to five experts (the supervisor of the study, two experts in the Department of Educational Management and two experts from the field of Measurement and Evaluation, Faculty of Education, University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria) for their comments on the face and content validity. Based on their comments and corrections, corrected copy was tested for reliability. The test re-test method of reliability was used. Copies of the questionnaire were administered in a State (Kebbi) that was not part of the sample of the study using 126 participants. The questionnaire was presented twice to the participants within an interval of four weeks. Responses from the two administrations of the questionnaire were analysed using the Pearson’s Product Moment Correlation statistic. The overall value of .89 coefficient was obtained. This indicated that the instrument is reliable.

Method of Data Analysis

The data collected for this study were analysed using the descriptive statistics of percentage, mean score and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions. Decision rule for this study is as follows:

Mean score from 4.1 – 5.0 was treated as “Very High”

Mean score from 3.1 – 4.0 was treated as “High”

Mean score from 2.1 – 3.0 was treated as “Moderate”

Mean score from 1.1 – 2.0 was treated as “Low”

Mean score from 0.1 – 1.0 was treated as “Very Low”.

Research Question 1: What is the competence level of university graduates’ communication skills in North-west, Nigeria?

Table 2: The competence level of university graduates’ communication skills in North-west, Nigeria

S/N	Communication Skill	Very High	High	Moderate	Low	Very Low	Total	Mean Rating	Remarks
1.	Free flow of oral communication	19	42	51	74	120	306	2.24	Mode
2.	Memo Writing	-	6	12	68	220	306	1.36	rate
3.	Report Writing	4	8	11	43	240	306	1.34	Low
4.	Minutes Taking	14	21	21	42	208	306	1.66	Low
5.	Listening Skill	15	13	186	52	40	306	2.71	Low
Grand mean = 1.86									Mode rate

As shown in table 2, the participants indicated that the competence levels of the university graduates were moderate in free flow of oral communication in English Language and in listening skill with the mean scores of 2.24 and 2.71 respectively. However, the participants rated the competence level of university graduate memo writing, report writing and minutes taking skills as low with the mean scores of 1.36, 1.34 and 1.66 respectively.

The grand mean generated from the data presented was 1.86. This implied that the competence level of the university graduates' English Language communication skills was low.

Table 3: The Competence Level of the University Graduates' Basic Computer Skills in North west, Nigeria

S/N	Basic Computer Skill	Very High	High	Moderate	Low	Very Low	Total	Mean Rating	Remarks
1.	Word Processing	17	24	180	34	51	306	2.74	Moderate
2.	Spread Sheet	11	19	50	22	204	306	1.73	Low
3.		20	27	34	32	193	306	1.85	Low
4.	Statistical Packages	12	25	30	67	172	306	1.81	Low
5.	Presentation	24	40	140	40	62	306	2.75	Moderate
	Internet Skill								
	Grand mean = 2.18			Moderate					

As shown in Table 3, the participants indicated that the competence levels of the university graduates' basic computer skills in North-west, Nigeria were moderate in word processing and internet skills with the mean scores of 2.74 and 2.75 respectively. However, the participants expressed that the competence levels of university graduates in spread sheet, statistical packages and presentation were low with the mean scores of 1.73, 1.85 and 1.81 respectively. The grand mean generated from the data presented was 2.18. This implied that the competence level of university graduates' basic computer skills in North-west, Nigeria was moderate.

Research Question 4: What is the competence level of the university graduates' analytical skills in North-west, Nigeria?

Table 4 The Competence Level of the University Graduates' Analytical Skills in North-west, Nigeria

S / N	Analytical Skill	Very High	High	Moderate	Low	Very Low	Total	Mean Rating	Remarks
1	Problem handling skill	7	12	39	100	148	306	1.79	Low
2	Data Analysis	9	14	16	142	125	306	1.82	Low
3	Decision making skill	6	20	27	110	143	306	1.81	Low
4	Creative thinking	11	17	30	103	145	306	1.84	Low
5	Logical thinking	14	19	28	67	178	306	1.77	Low
Grand mean = 1.81		Low							

Table 4 revealed the mean ratings of the competence level of the university graduates' analytical skills. The participants indicated that the competence level of the university graduate problem handling skill was low with the mean score of 1.79, while their data analysis skill competence level was also low with the mean score of 1.82. The table also revealed that the university graduates' competence level in decision making, creative thinking and logical thinking skills were low with the mean scores of 1.81, 1.84 and 1.77 respectively. The grand mean of 1.81 was obtained implied that the competence level of the university graduates' analytical skills in North-west, Nigeria was low

Research Question 8: What is the competence level of the university graduates' entrepreneurial skills in North-west, Nigeria?

Table 5: The Competence Level of the University Graduates' Entrepreneurial Skills in North west, Nigeria

S/N	Entrepreneurial Skill	Very High	High	Moderate	Low	Very Low	Total	Mean Rating	Remarks
1.	Physical resources	13	11	33	58	191	306	1.68	Low
2.	Management	9	12	15	81	189	306	1.59	Low
3.	Financial	6	13	30	85	172	306	1.68	Low
4.	Management skill	15	20	18	149	104	306	1.99	Low
5.	Risk Management	4	11	19	98	174	306	1.60	Low
Planning Skill									
Innovative Skill									
Grand mean = 1.71		Low							

As shown in Table 5, the participants indicated that the competence levels of the university graduates in North-west, Nigeria were low in physical resources management and financial management skills with the mean scores of 1.68 and 1.59 respectively. Similarly, the participants expressed that the competence levels of the university graduate in risk management, planning and innovation skills were low with the mean scores of

1.68, 1.99 and 1.60 respectively. The grand mean generated from the data presented was 1.71. This implied that the competence level of university graduates' entrepreneurial skills in North-west was low.

Table 6: The Competence Level of the University Graduates' Interpersonal Skills in North-west, Nigeria

S/ N	Interpersonal Skill	Very High	Hig h	Mode rate	Low	Very Low	Total	Mean Rating	Remarks
1.	Ability to interact with people	28	31	92	66	89	306	2.48	Moderate
2.	Participation as a team member	7	14	23	95	167	306	1.68	Low
3.	Work with colleagues	27	50	89	87	53	306	2.70	Moderate
4.	Level of Cooperation	8	19	25	116	138	306	1.83	Low
5.	Adherence to instruction	14	25	20	111	136	306	1.92	Low
Grand mean = 2.12		Moderate							

As revealed in Table 6, the participants indicated that the university graduates' competence levels in North-west, Nigeria were moderate in the ability to interact with people and working with colleagues as indicated with the mean scores of 2.48 and 2.70 respectively. However, the participants expressed that the competence levels of the university graduate skills in participating as a team member, level of cooperation as well as adherence to instruction were low with the mean scores of 1.68, 1.83 and 1.92 respectively. The grandmean generated from the data presented was 2.12. This implied that the competence level of university graduates' interpersonal skills was moderate in North-west, Nigeria.

Discussion of Findings

Findings on the Extent of Competence Level of the University Graduate Communication Skills in North-west, Nigeria

The findings on the extent of the competence level of the university graduate communication skills in North-west, Nigeria revealed that the competence level of graduates' English Language communication skills was low (mean = 1.86). This implied that graduate communication skills in English Language was not moderate enough as some of them (graduates) are still deficient in their communication skills especially oral and written skills. The plausible reasons for this could be as a result of the poor teaching and learning of the Use of English and Communication Skills in the university which has not been so much effective because the teaching of the course is theoretically-oriented with few number of periods in a congested learning environment. This made Aduwa-Ogiegbaen and Iyamu (2005) to affirm that the content of these English courses are grossly inadequate for the students to acquire requisite skills in effective use of language for communication and for the give and take of social experience.

Findings on the Competence Level of the University Graduate Basic Computer Skills in North-west,

Nigeria

The findings also revealed that the competence level of basic computer skills possessed by university graduates in North-west, Nigeria was moderate (mean = 2.18). This finding implied that graduates have effective display of basic computer skills in terms of Microsoft word, excel and presentation among others. This is based upon the realisation of the importance of information and communication technologies in the today's world of work.

The plausible reason why labour market requires basic computer skills from graduate is that the use of computer and other information and communication technologies are needed in every area of human endeavor irrespective of areas of specialisation because of its versatility, efficiency, precision as well helps in facilitating job process faster and enhancing better productivity. This therefore, makes it a must-have skill for every graduate for better advantage in the labour market.

This finding corroborates with Brown, Hesketh and Williams (2003) that as a result of the new demand of the labour market, there has been a consistent global call for tertiary institutions to equip students with ICT skills by integrating the skills into their curriculum. This will enable students to adequately acquire and develop the employability skills needed throughout the course of their studies.

Findings on the Competence Level of the University Graduate Analytical Skills in North-west, Nigeria

Findings of this study further indicated that the competence level of analytical skills possessed by graduates in North-west was low (mean = 1.81). This means that, analytically, most graduates were deficient in decision making, logical and creative thinking. The plausible reason for this could be that there is a disconnect between knowledge acquisition and the reality of the world of work. This could be why graduates may not be able to apply correctly and appropriately the skills to the expectation of employers in finding solutions to the organisational challenges. This finding supported the findings of Philips Consulting (2014) that graduates underestimated the importance of the ability to think critically and analytically as they saw analytical skills as unimportant skills. This therefore explains reasons why employers of labour expressed a high level of dissatisfaction with this skill along with graduates' inability to work effectively on their own.

Findings on the Competence Level of the University Graduate Entrepreneurial Skills in North-West, Nigeria

Findings from this study shows that the competence level of graduate entrepreneurial skills in North-west, Nigeria was low (mean = 1.71). This implied that most graduates did not possess requisite competence skills necessary for job creation and self-reliance. This could be the plausible reason why many graduates are unemployable. As well, employers are looking for graduates who are business-driven and enterprising. When graduates are deficient of this, employers find it difficult to employ.

This finding supported Okebukola (2007) that most the Nigerian graduates were deficient in self-reliance and entrepreneurial skills while the type of education offered to them has constrained their entrepreneurial

capability and their success in the world of business. Uche, Nwabueche and Ememe (2009) supported that university graduates lack entrepreneurial skills because they were taught theoretical knowledge without entrepreneurial skills. Akpan and Etor (2013) in support of Okebukola (2007) and Uche et al. (2009) affirmed that most graduates from the universities only acquire academic knowledge without entrepreneurial skills which would have enabled them to create jobs for themselves, others and contribute effectively towards national economic development.

Findings on the Competence Level of the University Graduate Interpersonal Skills in North-West, Nigeria

The findings on the competence level of interpersonal skills possessed by graduates in North-west, Nigeria revealed that the interpersonal skills possessed by graduates were moderate (mean = 2.12). This finding shows that university graduates have moderate competence level and ability to interact with people and colleagues in getting things done. This finding supported McClellan (2001) that the university graduates must learn how to accept the people working in teams and working together on projects must adapt to each other in the workplace. Interpersonal skills enable graduates to work productively with people from different races, ages, cultures, genders and lifestyles (Jackson & Chapman, 2012). Personal attributes also help graduates to promote harmony and excellent working conditions (Aigbavboa & Aliu, 2017).

Conclusion

The competence level of the university graduate soft skills competence was low. Therefore, the university graduates in North-west did not possess adequately the required soft employability competence that will enhance their employability.

Recommendations

Based on the low competence level of graduate employability skills competence in North-west, Nigeria especially in communication, entrepreneurial and analytical skills as shown in this study, the following recommendations were made that:

1. more time should be allocated to the teaching and learning of the Use of English and Communication Skills. The teaching and learning of this course should be in practical (interactive) sessions in a more conducive learning condition especially by grouping students into moderate learning size of 20 per group;
2. more practical tasks on decision making, creative and logical thinking should be organised for undergraduate students periodically. It is hoped that this will help in inculcating and developing in graduates the ability to be analytical in the world of work.
3. entrepreneurship skills among the Nigerian university graduates should be enhanced the more by making all entrepreneurial or vocational centers in all the Nigerian universities more viable through activity or

practical-based teaching and learning.

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INFLUENCE OF SKILL ACQUISITION, CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION IN ENTREPRENEURSHIP GROWTH INAWKA

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ABSTRACT

Despite various policies and programmes by the government aimed at enhancing entrepreneurship growth through the development of small and medium scale enterprises (SMEs), the level of poverty and unemployment rate have remained high. The objective of this paper is to investigate the influence of skill acquisition, innovation and creativity on entrepreneurship growth in Awka Metropolis. The study employed survey research design. The population of the study was 139 registered tailors, carpenters and show makers in Awka Metropolis. The judgmental sampling technique was utilized to identify the sample of entire census population. Closed ended structured questionnaire was used to collect primary data. Cronbach alpha coefficient was used to test the reliability of instruments used. Data was analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Hypotheses were tested using multiple regression. The finding shows that skill acquisition and creativity positively and significantly influence entrepreneurship growth. The study also showed that innovation has no significant influence on entrepreneurship growth. The study recommended that the government, non-governmental organisations and other stakeholders should continue to promote skill acquisition, creativity and innovation to reduce joblessness as well as criminal activities in Awka Metropolis.

Introduction

Nigeria as a country has numerous business and investment potentials due to the abundant, vibrant and dynamic human and natural resources it possesses. The performance and effectiveness of entrepreneurs in the country as an instrument of economic growth and development has long been under scrutiny. This intense scrutiny has been against the backdrop of the low performance and inefficiency that characterized small business particularly in assessing its role on economic growth and development (Dimnwobi, Ekesiobi & Mgbemena, 2016). A nation's ability to generate a steady stream of business opportunities can only come about when its people take to entrepreneurial activities. Good entrepreneur can create a strong economy. Nigerians have equally made their marks in diverse fields such as science, technology, academics, business and entertainment. Entrepreneurship activities and innovative ingenuity in Nigeria have developed enterprises in areas such as agriculture/agroallied, solid minerals, transportation, information, and telecom, hospitality and tourism business, building and construction (Dimnwobi et al, 2016). With these human and natural resources notwithstanding, Nigeria is still one of the poorest countries in the world and has one of the highest rates of youth unemployment in sub-Sahara Africa, and despite its alleged strong economic growth (Nkechi, Emeh & Okechukwu, 2012). In respect of the above sad and deplorable situation, the government has done little to reduce the misery and frustrations of the citizenry. This has foisted a state of hopelessness on majority of young and old people who have resorted to any means including crime to succeed in life. They resort to vices because they are not gainfully engaged (Teru, 2015). In order words, they are unemployed; not because they lack the qualification but because the system has been crippled politically, economically, socio-cultural and even religiously (Nkechi et al, 2012). The need for entrepreneurship development in the country today is necessitated by the fact that entrepreneurship development is a major factor in economic growth and development and also the permanent cure for extreme hunger and poverty necessitated by unemployment. In today's highly competitive world, most economic success depends increasingly on the ability to create, innovate and acquire skill. With the advent of a global knowledge economy, knowledge is increasingly the primary source of innovation, creativity and skill acquisition (Ezenwakwelu & Ikon, 2014). Creativity, innovation and skill acquisition are central to the development of any economy. Creativity is the thinking process involved in producing an idea or a concept that is new, original, useful, or satisfying to its creator or to someone else. Creativity

innovation and skill acquisition are central to the development of any economy. Creativity is the thinking process involved in producing an idea or a concept that is new, original, useful, or satisfying to its creator or to someone else. Creativity involves coming up with a new idea. Innovation on the other hand usually implies the use of these new ideas to produce novel products and processes (Shelley, 2004). Hence, creativity enables individuals to produce ideas that are new and important, innovation is the practice where creative ideas are converted to produce significant accomplishments or results (Ezenwakwelu & Ikon, 2014). Skill acquisition is the ability to be trained on a particular task or function and become expert in it. Entrepreneurship is the ability of a person to see business opportunity and exploit it (Oluwadare, 2015). For creativity, innovation and skill acquisition to take place in an economy, a paradigm shift is required as they are vital ingredients for translating products of research into outcomes that can enhance profitability and satisfaction (Oluwadare, 2015). This seems like a tall order for a country like Nigeria where there are many forces that militate against creativity, innovation and skill acquisition. Basic social amenities like electricity, water, roads, health care services and houses are grossly inadequate. This makes an average Nigerian worker to be pre-occupied with providing basic necessities of life on their own with little or no time left for creative and innovative thinking and skill acquisition. Creativity, innovations and skill acquisition have not been given their rightful positions in the development of the Nigerian economy. For instance, youths at different times and different geographical locations in Nigeria have produced machineries, equipment, technology methodology, products and services which were announced as laudable but not encouraged nor sponsored (Oluwadare, 2015). It is against this background that this study tends to investigate the influence of innovation, creativity and skill acquisition on entrepreneurship growth in Awka Metropolis.

Statement of the Problem

Creativity and innovation are key factors in entrepreneurship growth and development, which have been in practice since time past (Dimnwobi et al, 2016). It comes in the form of skill acquisition, whereby people acquire the inherent in the family or from skillful people around them (Dimnwobi et al, 2016). Hence, growth of enterprise cannot be sustained without skill acquisition, creativity and innovation. In Nigeria, studies have been carried out on factors influencing entrepreneurship growth (Salami, 2013). Given the generally held view that entrepreneurship growth is the key to poverty eradication, employment generation and rapid economic development, various governments in Nigeria have, over the past three decades, evolved policies and programmes, aimed at enhancing entrepreneurship growth through the development of small and medium scale enterprises (SMEs). In spite of all the efforts, unemployment rate has remained high, rising from 13.1% in year 2000 to 23.9% in 2011, with youth unemployment put at over 50% (IMF, 2013). Over 100 million Nigerians live below poverty line on less than US\$1 a day and with the percentage of the population in abject poverty rising from 54.7% in 2004 to 60.9% in 2010 (Yusuf, 2011). Above all, Nigeria's human development index (HDI) remains abysmally low at 0.453, much below world weighted average of 0.7 (UNDP, 2006). Hence this paper tends to investigate the influence of skill acquisition, innovation and

creativity on entrepreneurship growth in Awka Metropolis.

Objectives of the Study

The general objective of this study is to investigate the factors influencing entrepreneurship growth and development in Awka Metropolis.

However, the specific objectives of the study are to;

1. determine whether creativity has significant influence on entrepreneurship growth and development in Awka Metropolis.
2. examine whether innovation has significant influence on entrepreneurship growth and development in Awka Metropolis.
3. determine whether skill acquisition has significant influence on entrepreneurship growth and development in Awka Metropolis.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised in the course of carrying out this research;

1. Does creativity significantly influence entrepreneurship growth and development in Awka Metropolis?
2. Does innovation significantly influence entrepreneurship growth and development in Awka Metropolis?
3. Does skill acquisition significantly influence entrepreneurship growth and development in Awka Metropolis?

Hypotheses of the study

The following are hypotheses of the study;

1. Creativity has no significant influence on entrepreneurship growth and development in Awka Metropolis.
2. Innovation has no significant influence on entrepreneurship growth and development in Awka Metropolis.
3. Skill acquisition has no significant influence on entrepreneurship growth and development in Awka Metropolis.

Literature Review

Introduction

This section focuses on the concept of creativity, innovation, skill acquisition and entrepreneurship growth.

Creativity

Creativity has been viewed as the construction of ideas or products which are new and potentially useful (Fillis & Rentschler, 2010). Creativity has been identified as one of the most distinct of human attributes. It is indeed a special case of problem solving in which originality is emphasized (Achor, 2014). Creativity is marked by the ability to create, bring into existence, to invent into a new form, to produce through imaginative skill, to make to bring into existence something new (Dimnwobi et al, 2016). Creativity is also an attitude, the ability to accept change and newness, a willingness to play with ideas and possibilities, a flexibility of outlook, the habit of enjoying the good, while looking for ways to improve it (Okpara, 2007). Creativity is a process by which a symbolic domain in the culture is changed. Creativity is the ability to make or otherwise bring into existences something new, whether a new solution to a problem, a new method or device, or a new artistic object or form. Creativity is the act of seeing things that everyone around us sees while making connections that no one else has made. Creativity is moving from the known to the unknown (Okpara, 2007). Creativity is problem solving, albeit of an original innovative nature (Dimnwobi et al, 2016). It is the process of sensing difficulties, problems, gaps in information, missing elements making guesses of formulating hypothesis about these deficiencies, testing and retesting them and finally communicating the results (Oluwadare, 2015). In order to be considered creative, a product or an idea must be different from what has been done before but the product or idea cannot be merely different for difference sake; it must also be appropriate to the goal at hand, correct, valuable, or expressive of meaning (Dimnwobi et al, 2016). Halim and Mat (2010) view creativity basically as a term that implies the process of developing original, novel, and appropriate response to problems. Creativity in a microeconomic sense, allows an organization to take advantage of opportunities which develop as the result of changing environmental conditions. Creativity plays an important role in new product development and creativity consists of three techniques: brainstorming, visual confrontation, morphological techniques (Phong-inwong and Ussahawanitchakit, 2011 in Adegboyega, 2012). However, Umar and Norashidah (2017) conducted a study on entrepreneurship education, creativity and entrepreneurial career option among polytechnic students in Nigeria. The study employed survey research design. The sample size of the study is 90 students selected randomly from Audu Bako College of Agriculture (ABCOA), Danbatta. Data was analysed with multiple regression. The finding indicated that there is a positive significant relationship between entrepreneurship education, creativity and entrepreneurial career option among Polytechnic Students in Nigeria. The study recommended that polytechnic graduates can apply their knowledge of know-what, know - how, know-why, and creativity to explore entrepreneurial career option. Rui, Li, Wei and Peng (2018) conducted a study on creativity, proactive personality, and entrepreneurial intention: the role of entrepreneurial alertness. Population of the study was 857 undergraduate students from 26 universities volunteered to participate in this survey. The sample size of the study was 735. Data was analyse using pearson's correlation coefficient and SPSS version 22, structural equation modeling (SEM) via AMOS 17.0 and Chi-square statistic, The finding showed that there is positive effects of creativity and proactive personality on entrepreneurial alertness. The study recommended that creativity, proactive personality, and entrepreneurial alertness are three key factors in the

entrepreneurship process.

Innovation

Innovation is seen as the successful exploitation of new ideas (Fagerberg 2005). Innovation is alternatively viewed as a process of taking ideas to market. It describes the process of adding value to creative ideas (Oluwadare, 2015). Lucke and Katz (2003) assert that innovation from an organization perspective is the successful introduction of a new thing or method. Innovation is the embodiment, combination or synthesis of knowledge in original, relevant, valued new products, process or services. Innovation is the application of better solutions that meet new requirements, unarticulated needs or existing market needs (Dimnwobi et al, 2016). This is accomplished through more effective products, processes, services, technologies, or ideas that are readily available to markets, governments, and society. Innovation is defined as adding something new to an existing product or process. The key words are adding and existing. The product or process has already been created from scratch and has worked reasonably well. When it is changed for it to work better or fulfill a different need, then there is innovation on what already exists. Innovation is the process of bringing the best ideas into reality, which triggers a creative idea, which generates a series of innovative events (Dimnwobi et al, 2016). Without innovation an enterprise and what it provides quickly become obsolete (Okpara, 2007). Innovation differs from invention in that innovation refers to the use of better and, as a result, novel idea or method, whereas invention refers more directly to the creation of the idea or method itself (Ezenwakwelu & Ikon, 2014). Innovation can result in inventions or the ability to generate entirely new outcomes through refinement in products and processes: technology or administration in an organization either in each of these items separately or in all of them collectively. Kuczmarski, Middlebrooks, and Swaddling (2000) suggest that innovation brings a new perceived benefit or value to a customer, employee, or shareholder. The new perceived benefit ranges from minimal to massive and may be functional, psychological, emotional, or financial. Innovation requires a fresh way of looking at things, an understanding of people, and an entrepreneurial willingness to take risks and to work hard (Dimnwobi et al, 2016). An idea doesn't become an innovation until it is widely adopted and incorporated into people's daily lives. Schumpeter (1934 in Idam, 2014) believes that the concept of innovation, described as the use of an invention to create a new commercial product or service, is the key force in creating new demand and thus new wealth. Jamal, Mohammed and Ilias (2013) carried out a study on innovation and entrepreneurship: an empirical study of Moroccan firms. The study employed qualitative research design. The sample size of the study was 250 employees in Moroccan companies.

Structured interview was used to generate data from primary source. Data was analysed using content analysis. The finding shows that entrepreneurship and innovation have positive significant relationship. The study concludes that entrepreneurship and innovation are systematic behaviours and systematic efforts are required to incorporate them into the operations of organizations. The study recommended that entrepreneurship and innovation should be regarded as ongoing and everyday practice in organizations. Olu,

Marius, Anca & Florentina (2017) carried out a research on impact of innovation on the entrepreneurial success in Nigeria. The study employed survey research design. Population of the study is 216 Nigerian Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). The sample size of the study is 160 respondents selected from the population. Questionnaire and interview were used to generate data from the primary source. Data was analysed using one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA). The finding revealed that there is a positive significant relationship between innovation and financial performance of SMEs. The study concludes that innovation was found to improve product quality and corporate image and these have subsequently enhanced entrepreneurial success and performance. The study recommended that engaging in innovative activities will achieve bumper success in many entrepreneurial ventures.

Skill Acquisition

Skill acquisition is a process whereby a person acquires or learns a particular skill or type of behaviour needed for business through training or education in order to identify and exploit entrepreneurial opportunity for self-employment ((Amadi, 2012; Chukwunyenye & Igboke, 2011; Samian & Buntat, 2012). It also helps entrepreneurs to acquire self-confidence, self-esteem and participate in decision-making at household and community levels (Rufai et al., 2013). Skill acquisition and tertiary education could lead to business opportunities and impact on entrepreneurship (Emaikwu, 2011). Exploitation of entrepreneurial opportunity also depends on the entrepreneur's level of education, skills or knowledge acquired through training, work experience and social network (Shastri & Sinha (2010). Training and/or education produce prior experience which leads to preparedness for entrepreneurial activity (Shane, 2003). The awareness of the need for skill acquisition and supports in order to stimulate entrepreneurial activity and reduce business failure have been increased among stakeholders in the industry, business and government of many countries because entrepreneurs could be born or made (Shane, 2003). It is also a vital source of developing human capital (Ikegwu, Ajiboye, Aromolaran, Ayodeji & Okorafor, 2014). Though Rufai et al. (2013) and Dasmani (2011) found that entrepreneurship graduates could not get employment because they possessed low skills and low self-confidence required by industries since there was no industrial exposures while in school, however; numerous studies asserted that skill training and tertiary education could lead to entrepreneurial activity or selfemployment (Amadi, 2012). Chiekezie, Nzewi, and Iyekekpolor (2016) carried out a research on entrepreneurial skill acquisition and job creation in Benin City, Nigeria. The study employed descriptive research design. Population of the study is 579161 registered voters in Benin City. The sample size of the study is 400 respondents selected from the population. Both primary and secondary sources used for data collection. Data was analysed with Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Findings revealed that there is a positive correlation between skill acquisition and job creation. The study concludes that there is a positive significance relationship between skill acquisition and job creation in Benin City. This implies that when there is entrepreneurship skill acquisition, jobs will be created. The study recommended that the government should continue to promote skill acquisition and the youths should embrace skill acquisition to reduce

joblessness as well as criminal activities in Benin City and Nigeria at large. Ekong and Ekong (2016) conducted a study on skills acquisition and unemployment reduction in Nigeria: A case study of National Directorate of Employment (NDE) in Akwa Ibom. The study employed survey research design. The population of study is 3,920,208 people in the state. The sample size of the study was 141 employees in NDE. Data was collected from both primary and secondary sources using questionnaire and interview methods. The result found a positive relationship between Skills Acquisition by NDE and Unemployment reduction in Akwa Ibom State. Thus, we recommend more spread of NDE training centers to all the Local Government Areas in the State for more benefits to be realized, among others. Skill acquisition training was found to have positive effect on entrepreneurial activity in Nigeria (Ikegwu, et al, 2014). Skill acquisition training was found to have positive effect on entrepreneurial activity in France (Brana, 2008). Skill acquisition training had positive impact on entrepreneurial opportunity in Germany (Stohmeyer, 2007).

Concept of Entrepreneurship Growth

Entrepreneurship is seen as the process which involves the effort of an individual or individuals in identifying viable business opportunities in an environment and obtaining and managing the resources needed to exploit those opportunities. Teru, (2015) describe entrepreneurship as the willingness and ability of an individual to seek out investment opportunities and takes advantage of scarce resources to exploits the opportunities profitably. It is the process of creating something new with value by devoting the necessary time and efforts, assuming the accompanying financial social risks at the end receiving resulting reward. Entrepreneurship, as an emerging field of study and as an area of human endeavour, has received increasing interest of researchers, academicians and policy makers the world over. It has equally provoked controversies over its concept and definition. Entrepreneurship is seen as an effective means not only of combating unemployment, poverty and underdevelopment in the developing nations, but also as a strategy for rapid economic development in both developed and developing nations (Idam, 2014). Naude (2011) contends that global development is entering a phase, where entrepreneurship will increasingly play a more important role. He adduces three reasons for this development. The first is that the managed economy of the 1970s–2000 in the West, characterized by reliance on big business and mass production, has given way to a so-called entrepreneurial economy, where knowledge-driven goods and services are more flexibly provided by smaller creative class. Secondly, impressive growth in the emerging economies, notably Brazil, Russia, India and China, has been driven by innovative entrepreneurial revolution. Thirdly, in the least developed countries, where dependency is high, donor agencies have been shifting emphasis in development cooperation towards private sector development. Naude (2011) draws the conclusion that entrepreneurship will contribute to growth and employment creation in advanced, emerging and least developed economies alike. Thus, this study sees entrepreneurship growth as the process of enhancing entrepreneurial skills and knowledge through structured training and institution building programmes. Entrepreneurship growth aims to enlarge the base of entrepreneurs in order to hasten the pace at which new ventures are created (Teru,

2015).

2.6 Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored with Schumpeter (1934) innovation theory of entrepreneurship. This theory considers entrepreneurship as the catalyst that disrupts the stationary circular flow of the economy and thereby initiates and sustains the process of development. Embarking upon ‘new combinations’ of the factors of production - which he terms, innovation - the entrepreneur activates the economy to a new level of development. Schumpeter introduced a concept of innovation as key factor in entrepreneurship in addition to assuming risks and organising factor of production. Schumpeter defines entrepreneurship as a creative activity. An innovator who brings new products or services into the economy is given the status of an entrepreneur. He regards innovation as a tool of entrepreneur. The entrepreneur is viewed as the ‘engine of growth’. He sees the opportunity for introducing new products, new markets, new sources of supply and new forms of industrial organizations.

Research Model

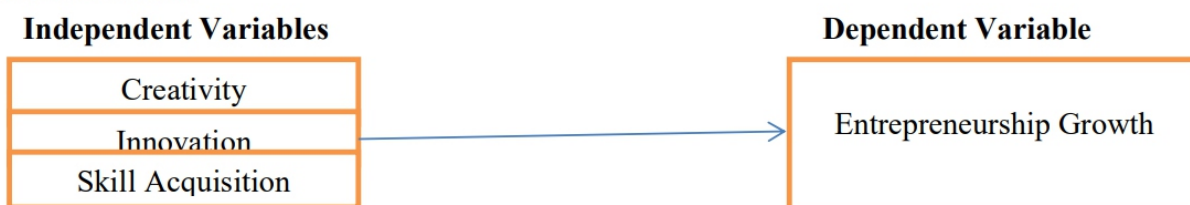


Figure 1

Research Model

The model in figure 1 represents the frame work of the study. The independent variables are creativity, innovation and skill acquisition predicting the dependent variable entrepreneurship growth.

Methodology

The study employed survey research design. The population of the study was 139 registered tailors, carpenters and show makers in Awka metropolis (93 registered tailors, 42 registered carpenters and 25 registered shoe makers). The judgmental sampling technique was utilized to identify the sample of entire census population and no sample size formula is required. Closed ended structured questionnaire was used to collect primary data. Cronbach Alpha coefficient was used to determine the reliability of the instruments used. Data was analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Hypotheses were tested using multiple regression.

Measurement of Variables

The closed ended structured questionnaire was used to generate primary data. Responses of all items were measured by agreement with statements, which are ranging from 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=neutral, 4=agree to 5=strongly agree on a five-point Likert scale. Also, reliability test shows how the

items in a set are positively related to each other in the reliability coefficient. According to the result of the reliability test, the closer the Cronbach's Alpha is to 1, the higher the internal consistency reliability. If the reliability is less than 0.60 then it is considered as poor. Meanwhile if it is in the range of 0.70, it is considered as acceptable. As for those which are more than 0.80, it is considered reliably good (Sekaran, 2007). Thus the items utilized for the instrument can be said to be reliable as can be seen below;

Table 1: Cronbach Alpha Result

Variable	Cronbach Alpha	Number of items
Skill Acquisition	0.926	5
Innovation	0.944	5
Creativity	0.967	5
Entrepreneurship Growth	0.880	5

The table 1 above shows that the Cronbach Alpha for skill acquisition is 0.926, innovation is 0.944, creativity is 0.967 and entrepreneurship growth is 0.880. This implies that all the variables are considered as reliably good because they are more than 0.8.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Skill Acquisition	139	3.44	0.88
Innovation	139	3.83	0.69
Creativity	139	3.16	1.09
Entrepreneurship Growth	139	3.31	0.81

Table 2 above shows the result of the descriptive analysis for the research variable. The mean value of these variables is in between 3.16 to 3.83. Meanwhile, a standard deviation is the dispersion value which indicates the gap in between one respondent to another respondent. The standard deviation can be considered as good when the value is smaller. According to table 2, the highest standard deviation is recorded in the creativity. Meanwhile the lowest is the innovation with 0.69. This implies that Awka metropolis is experiencing high entrepreneurship growth.

Findings and Discussions

Table 3: Demographic Profile

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	79	56.83
Female	60	43.17
Total		100.0
Age		
<30years	25	17.99
30-40years	61	43.88
41-50years	33	23.74
>50years	20	14.39
Total	139	100.0
Marital status		
Single	54	38.85
Married	85	61.15
Total	139	100.0
Educational Qualification		
WAEC/NCE/O	89	64.03
ND		
Degree & Above	50	35.97
Total	139	100.0
Working Experience		
<5years	17	12.23
5-10years	42	30.22
11-15years	45	32.37
>15 years	35	25.18
Total	139	100.0

Source: (Researchers Computation, 2019)
, 2019)

As can be seen from the demographic profile of the respondents above, the result reveals that amongst other things male respondents were more as they constitute 56.83% while females were 43.17%. The age distribution shows that more of the entrepreneurs are within the age bracket of 30-40years with a high percentile score of 43.88%, less than 30years were 17.99%, 41-50years; 23.74% while greater than 50years were 14.39%. This implies that on average, the entrepreneurs were within the age bracket of 30-40years which are still part of the active population. The marital status revealed that a significant portion of the respondents were of the married category as they constitute 61.15% while singles were 38.85% of the population. Educational qualification shows that significant responses of 64.03% are WAEC, NCE and OND holders. While 35.97% are degree holders and above. Also, the working experience reveal that more of the respondents had averagely 11-15years experience as they constitute 32.37% of the responses, less than 5years were 12.23%, 5-10years were 30.23% while greater than 15years were 25.18% of the sampled responses.

Correlation Analysis

In order to inspect the relationship between all the variables in the research model, the correlations analysis was used. This is because; this research study is using the interval scale. Based on the correlation, the significant is at the level 0.01 and 0.05. According to Sekaran (2007) on the Davis scale, correlation analysis is used to interpret the relationship between the independent variables as follows:

Table 4: Correlations Matrix

		EG	SA	I	C
Pearson Correlation	EG	0.01			
	SA	0.302**	0.01		
	I	0.811**	0.087**	0.01	
	C	0.805**	0.150	0.828**	0.01

**Correlation is significant at 0.01 level (2tailed).

Table 4 above shows that the three variables correlate perfectly as evidenced by high coefficients of 0.301, 0.811 and 0.805. This shows that skill acquisition, innovation and creativity relate positively. This implies that the level of entrepreneurship growth in Awka metropolis is directly positive with the three identified factors given skill acquisition, innovation and creativity.

Regression analysis

A multiple regression analysis is being used to measure the correlative coefficient and the relationship between independent and dependent variables. This regression helps to show how well the independent variables predict values to the dependent variable.

Table 5: Result of Multiple Regression

Model		Beta	T	Sig.
1	(Constant)			
	SA	0.730		0.000
	I	-0.18		0.754
	C	0.374		0.000
	F-stat		126.4633	
	P. Value F-stat			0.000
	R		0.859	
	R Squared		0.738	
	Adjusted R ²		0.732	

Source; SPSS Output, 2019

Table 5 above shows the results of regression for the total of three independent variables toward the dependent variable which is entrepreneurship growth.

Skill Acquisition and Entrepreneurship Growth

The regression result above shows that skill acquisition positively and significantly influences

entrepreneurship growth as evidenced by a positive beta coefficient of 0.730 and p-value of 0.000. This implies that assuming other factors are held constant, a slight change in skill acquisition would result to 73% positive and significant increase on entrepreneurship growth at 0.05 significance level. Hence, skill acquisition encourages entrepreneurship growth. This supports the study conducted by Ikegwu, et al (2014); (Brana, 2008); (Stohmeyer, 2007) and (Samian, Chiekezie, Nzewi & Iyekekpolor, 2016) where skill acquisition was found to have positive influence on entrepreneurial activity.

Innovation and Entrepreneurship Growth

From the regression result above, it is surprising that innovation has no significant influence on entrepreneurship growth as evidenced by beta coefficient of -0.18 and p value of 0.754. This implies that a unit change in innovation would bring about a 1.8% marginal change in entrepreneurship growth. This was in contrast with the work of Jamal, Mohammed and Ilias (2013) which found that entrepreneurship and innovation have positive significant relationship. This was also in contrast with the work of Olu et al (2017) which state that innovation improves product quality and corporate image and these have subsequently enhances entrepreneurship growth. This also implies that engaging in innovative activities will achieve bumper success in many entrepreneurial ventures. This means that the null hypothesis H02 cannot be invalidated in this study, hence, the study fail to reject the null hypothesis that innovation has no significant influence on entrepreneurship growth.

Creativity and Entrepreneurship Growth

Creativity shows positive significant influence on entrepreneurship growth as evidenced by a positive beta coefficient of 0.374 and p-value of 0.000. This implies that the more the entrepreneurs are creative the more the entrepreneurship growth in an economy. This is in line with the work of Rui et al (2018) which found positive significant effect on creativity and entrepreneurial alertness. The study states that creativity and entrepreneurial alertness are the key factors in the entrepreneurship process. The study of Umar and Norashidah (2017) support that entrepreneurs can apply their knowledge of know-what, know-how, know-why, and creativity to explore entrepreneurial career option. The fitness statistic value of 126.4633 which is significant at 5% significance level implies that the variables of the study were properly selected and combined to explain the variation in the explained variable. Also, the coefficient of multiple determinations represented by the R-squared value of 0.738 implies that at collective level, the independent variables accounts for a significant change in entrepreneurship growth by 73.8% while other factors not considered in this study account for the remaining 26.2% changes. The adjusted R-square value of 0.732 implies that after adjusting for likely errors, there is still a traceable effect level of 73.2% on entrepreneurship growth.

Table 6: Test of formulated Hypotheses

Model	Beta	Hypotheses `	Sig.	Decision
SA	0.730	I	0.000	Reject
I	-0.18	II	-0.754	Not Rejected
C	0.374	III	0.000	Reject

Conclusion

Creativity, innovation and skill acquisition are important elements of entrepreneurship growth. Without creative, innovative and skill acquisition, companies and national economy hardly grow. They are central to the development of any economy and are dynamic concepts. For any country to become and remain creative, innovative and acquire skill, such a country must constantly keep abreast and adopt relevant changes that pave the way for significant improvement. The importance of creativity, innovation and skill acquisition as tools that could be used to achieve entrepreneurship growth of nations cannot be over emphasized. They are of a decisive importance in economic development of countries and are now profoundly reshaping the patterns of the world's economic growth and activity. An economy with a weak creativity, innovation and skill acquisition base will frequently experience poor growth and such a nation will be entrapped in poverty and underdevelopment. Hence, skill acquisition, creativity and innovation have positive significant influence on entrepreneurship growth in an economy.

Based on the findings, the study recommends that;

1. The government, non-governmental organisations and other stakeholders should continue to promote skill acquisition. Also, the youths should embrace skill acquisition to reduce joblessness as well as criminal activities in Awka Metropolis.
2. The schools and other training institutions should encourage the young Nigerians to be more creative by applying their knowledge of know-what, know-how and know-why to explore the world market and become self-reliant and employers of labour.
3. The entrepreneurs should continue to engage in more innovative activities in order to achieve bumper success in many entrepreneurial ventures, thus, enhances entrepreneurship growth in Awka Metropolis.

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