

ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION AND COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE OF AGRO BASED SMALL BUSINESSES IN BENUE STATE OF NIGERIA

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Abstract

The effect of Entrepreneurship Education on competitiveness of agro based small businesses in Benue State of Nigeria was empirically investigated in this study. Survey design was employed for the study while needed data was collected from primary source with the aid of self designed questionnaires which was administered to fifty (50) owners/managers of the businesses studied. Data collected were analyzed using correlation statistical tool and SPSS version 24. Regression statistical tool was used to test the hypothesis at 5 % level of significance. Result of the analysis indicated that Entrepreneurship Education have a significant positive effect on competitiveness of the Agro base small businesses studied. Based on the outcome of the analysis, the study had no option than to conclude that Entrepreneurship Education has significant effect on the competitive advantage of Agro based small businesses in the study area. It was recommended (among other) that in order to create a successful competitive

advantage, Management of Agro based small businesses in the study area should be more devoted on ensuring that their staff benefit from Entrepreneurship education to maintaining and strengthening their competitiveness.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship Education, Competitive Advantage, Agro based Small Businesses.

1.0 Introduction

Today's global business world has become increasingly challenging, dynamic and competitive owing to a good number of factors including: globalization, increasing customer demands, competition, increased risk, uncertainty, complexity, chaos, contradiction, etc. The development has left businesses with no other option than to be opportunity driven, innovation-oriented, proactive, risk-accepting etc with relevant different set of marketing skills and competencies to understand customer needs, market trends, market positioning and achieve enhanced performance. This has also compelled businesses to ensure that their employees are entrepreneurial and acquire relevant skills and competencies to help them to cope with the development (Lewis, 2020).

Evaluations have shown that a company's inability to make explosive positive impact in their performance and remain competitive rests heavily on lack of relevant entrepreneurial marketing skills which negates their ability to take advantage of relevant opportunities. Understanding and successfully engaging in how markets function is challenging especially in unstable times (Fiet, 2010). Beside, to be successful in the market demands appropriate skills which must comprise the ability to identify, quantify and meet the needs, wants, and desires of consumers, that is, of those people who create market demand.

The right place to acquire appropriate entrepreneurial skills that are capable of coping with today's challenging business world lies in part on entrepreneurship education which is key in the training and development of appropriate human resources through the impartation of relevant skills, capacities, values, knowledge and attitudes that has all it takes to transform learners, businesses, communities, nations and the world at large (Itodo, 2020). This type of education involves the process by which the learner is exposed to and acquires the many physical, moral, social capacities demanded of him to be successful (Haruna, 2021). It is also a vital means of equipping learners with the required competencies as it lays the necessary foundation for developing the human aspect of the entrepreneurship capital of any business organization. It is also concerned with the planning, management and administration of education refocuses on deliberate process of using formal and informal approaches to make it relevant, life-long and functional by addressing divers challenges including the acquisition of entrepreneurial marketing skills needed to transform an organization to success (Itodo, 2020). Such an educational system also involves the developing of the learner's personal attributes and skills that form the basis of an entrepreneurial mindset and behaviour, providing particular business skills and knowledge of how to run a firm effectively and successfully (European Commission, 2008). Through effective entrepreneurship education, relevant employees can access the knowledge needed for any business to succeed. Businesses that embrace entrepreneurship education find that their staff perform better in ensuring performance.

Entrepreneurial Education exposes learners to innovatively apply the collective knowledge, skills, and resources of a firm to it competitive (Ibiamke, 2017). It involves a process by which learners are exposed to identify strategies needed to anticipate and respond appropriately to the dynamic and challenging business environment which inevitably improve the competitiveness of business firms and ensures their performances (Banjoko, 2013). Enhancing competitiveness in any business through appropriate entrepreneurship education is of increasing interest to all firms (Kelson, 2014). The success or non competitiveness of all firms in today's challenging world rests in part on the nature and types of entrepreneurial skills they put in place for their businesses (Ediri, 2014).

The main objective of this study therefore is to examine the effect of Entrepreneurial Education on market performance of small businesses in Nigeria.

1.2 Study Hypothesis

The following hypothesis formulated in its null form was tested in this study:

H₀₁: Entrepreneurial Education has no effect on the competitiveness of small businesses in Makurdi Metropolis of Benue state, Nigeria

2.0 Literature Review

This section *reviews existing literature that relates to the topic under study.*

2.1 Theoretical Framework

A good number of different schools of thought have put forward different theories to explain those factors that explain the variables under study. The relationship between the variables under investigation fits into a good number of theories however it appears to be more associated with the Resource-Based View (RBV) theory of the firm.

2.1.1 The Resource-Based View (RBV) theory

The RBV, following Penrose's seminal work in late 1950s regained momentum in 1980s when Wernerfelt (1984) and Barney (1991) developed the idea further and applied it to the field of strategy. The RBV's current conceptualization proposes a framework for analyzing how firms may achieve sustained competitive advantage. The Resource-Based View (RBV) theory describes a firm as a unique bundle of tangible and intangible resources (assets, capabilities, competencies, organizational processes, firm attributes, information and knowledge and so forth) that are controlled by the firm. These resources enable a firm to implement strategies designed to improve its efficiency, effectiveness and competitiveness. The resource-based view suggests that valuable firm resources are usually scarce, imperfectly imitable and lacking in direct substitutes. A firm's resource must have four attributes: 1) it must be valuable; 2) it must be rare among a firm's current and prospective competition; 3) it must be imperfectly imitable; and 4) it cannot be substituted for strategically equivalent resource. The theoretical perspective of the RBV of the firm is therefore used as the explanatory framework for this study. The theory centers on the effective and efficient bundling, utilization, and deployment of a global organization's resources.

RBV theory is considered very relevant for this study because it envisions the organization as a unique bundle of accumulated tangible and intangible resource stocks. Once a firm has effectively deployed its resources including EM practices, any resulting competitive

advantage is sustained by the inability of others to substitute or imitate the firm-specific combination of resources on which the firm's strategy is based. Most frequently, resources are conceived of as internal attributes including tangible assets, specific internal capabilities, processes/procedures, routines, and knowledge, which are linked to or are controlled by the organization. This implies that human resources that are no longer viable must be downsized to create way for improved performance.

2.1 Conceptual definition

A good number of concepts used in this study are hereby defined to create room for a better understanding and appreciation of the study.

2.1.1 Education Defined

Education refers to a means of organizing the individual self and the social self, the I and the We into a disciplined, stable, meaningful and successful human undertaking. Adesola (2015) sees education as a process of facilitating learning and the acquisition of knowledge, skills, values, beliefs, and habits. The basic Educational methods include storytelling, discussion, teaching, training, and directed research. Further he stated that education frequently takes place under the guidance of educators, but learners may also educate themselves. Education can take place in formal or informal settings and any experience that has a formative effect on the way one thinks, feels, or acts may be considered educational.

2.1.2 Entrepreneurship

A clear understanding of the concept of entrepreneurship is fundamental for defining entrepreneurship education. Entrepreneurship is a complex and multi-faceted dynamic process of vision, change, and creation. It is a dynamic process of vision, change, and creation. It requires an application of energy and passion towards the creation and implementation of new ideas and creative solutions and it is attributed with qualities such as creativity, flexibility, ability to find novel solutions, opportunity recognition, proactiveness, value creation and risk taking in literature (Asenge, Diaka & Tsetim, 2017). Essential ingredients include the willingness to take calculated risks in terms of time, equity, or career; the ability to formulate an effective venture team; the creative skill to marshal needed resources; and fundamental skill of building solid business plan; and finally, the vision to recognize opportunity where others see chaos, contradiction, and confusion (Kuratko & Hodgetts, 2004). The basic understanding of entrepreneurship is that it transcends business creation since it dwells on basic concepts and precepts such as vision, change, opportunity seeking, creativity, innovation, risk taking and ability to manage activities in order to achieve specified objectives (Omoniyi & Osakinle, 2011).

When properly imparted to the persons with appropriate mindset, Entrepreneurship education prepares learners' ability to transform ideas into practice (European Commission, 2012). Today's challenging business world demands that individuals be equipped with entrepreneurial competencies so as to be productive and fully live fruitful life. One important and reliable medium through which entrepreneurship competences and practices can be acquired is Entrepreneurship education. It is the medium through which persons become more aware of their competencies in the context of their environment (e.g. work, social, etc.) and are better positioned to cope with it by seizing the available opportunities. It also provides

a foundation for persons to establish a social or commercial activity and successfully run same (European Commission, 2012).

2.1.3 Entrepreneurship Education

Entrepreneurship education defines the education process that involves developing behaviors, skills and attributes applied individually and/or collectively to help individuals and organizations of all kinds to create, cope with and enjoy change and innovation and by extension performance and competitiveness. It is an education system that is particularly tailored to equip the learner with entrepreneurship mind set and skills set that will enable them to their abilities, be innovative and facilitate social change (positioned ontologically prior to other forms of entrepreneurial activities), to think and/or behave entrepreneurially as an everyday practice, and/or to transform ideas and knowledge into feasible opportunities including running any business successfully (Hiangya, 2021). Entrepreneurship education prepares the trained to effectively handle new venture initiation by transferring knowledge and developing relevant skills that are capable of improving self efficacy and effectiveness of the potential learner. This type of Education encourages learners to think innovatively. It harnesses an individual learner's ability to turn ideas into action (European Commission, 2012) and it is relevant in each individual's personal, social and work life. The skills, behaviours, and attributes acquired through entrepreneurship education can be effectively used in all kinds of businesses. It involves learning through a particular pedagogy and learning about, which then refers to cognitive learning. Entrepreneurship education deals with three main components: 1) self-oriented, 2) internal and 3) external entrepreneurship. When properly acquired, Entrepreneurship education has all it takes for the learner to be productive which may transform to his organization's competitiveness (Kuratko, 2014).

Achieving long term competitiveness and survival in any business transcend beyond putting in place general marketing practices, appropriate marketing practices that has what it takes to ensure the competitiveness of any business in the present challenging business world must in addition to the general marketing practices have the right mix of entrepreneurial mindset, skills, characteristics and approaches which emanate from entrepreneurship education.

Entrepreneurship education impact in the learners the creative and innovative methods, processes, practices, procedure and generally accepted techniques and standards used by businesses in the pursuit of objectives to accomplish a set of defined tasks including being competitive (Itodo, 2021). Skills which are basically acquired from entrepreneurship education usually consist of diverse ways of transforming business values into processes that can ensure competitiveness (Ediri, 2021). The role of *entrepreneurial education in ensuring the competitiveness and performance of small businesses in today's competitive and technological driven business environment has been acknowledged globally* (Hanmaikyur, 2016).

2.1.4 Agro based Small Businesses

For this paper we define Agro based small businesses as independent owner/managed agricultural based small business organizations of limited significance within the industry, employing a very few employees, where the owner/manager's omnipresence creates a highly personalized management style. This class of businesses embodies diverse kinds of sophistication, skills, capital, growth orientation and are found in all the nooks and crannies of the study area. *Agro based Small Businesses* are owned by individuals, groups, corporate

organizations and government and their owners may or may not be poor (Naelati, and SobrotullInti, 2014). They deals with goods and services that relate to agriculture and the products directly or indirectly support the effort to produce and deliver agricultural products from the farm to the consumer.

2.1.5 Competitive Advantage

Competitive advantage is a term that refers to the ability gained through attributes and relevant resources to perform at a higher level than others in the same industry or market (Josiah, 2013). Competitive advantage shows that direct relation of costumer's desired values, companies supplied values and values supplied by the company's competitors will determine requirements and dimensions of competitive advantage. Porter (2008) reveals that competition is at the core of a company's success or failure. This implies that failure depends on the courage of the company to compete, it is impossible to achieve success. Competition determines the accuracy of a company's activities that can support its performance, such as innovation, cohesive culture or good practice. A firm is said to have a competitive advantage when it is implementing a value creating strategy not simultaneously being implemented by any current or potential player (Barney, 1991).

Competitive advantage is a concept that is based on economic theories on competitiveness of organizations, emphasizing their particular value in resources that they dispose of, as well as the products and services offered in the market. Ansoff, (1984) defines it as characteristics of unique opportunities within the field define by the product-market scope and the growth vector. Sustainable competitive advantage can be achieved when the marketing intelligent capabilities is creative enough to hold the competition imitate and is also capable of creating competition in a long time (Bharawaj, Varadarajan & Fahy,1993).

Two important points should be considered in the creation of competitive advantage: First, the path is a continuing process that will lead to higher performance and competitiveness of the organization. This means that if an organization due to its competence, can create a sustainable competitive advantage which is valuable to customers, and will always be superior than competitors, it has actually left a proper function and brought competitiveness. Second, because of the increasing complexity of the environment and competition severity, the competitive advantage is easily imitated by competitors or paled in customers' view and should soon be replaced with new advantages. Accordingly, organizations should be thinking about finding its competitive advantage (Sadri & Lees, 2001).

2.1.6 Effect of Entrepreneurship education on competitive advantage of Agro based small businesses

Entrepreneurship education is grounded on the fact that businesses are today operating in a competitive and challenging business world and so have to be competitive, effective, efficient and competitive. This type of education aims to improve competitiveness of any existing business, to help people develop their capacities so that their business organizations can meet most, if not all, its future requirements for competitiveness.

A study by Izedonmi and Okafor, (2010) concluded that entrepreneurship education is focused on developing the educated with the passion and multiple skills just as it aims to reduce the risk associated with entrepreneurship thought and guide the firm successfully via

its initial stage to the majority. Azuma, (2018) pointed out that entrepreneurship education is designed to communicate and inculcate competencies, skills, knowledge, and values needed to recognize business opportunity, organize and start new business venture and achieve competitive advantage by transforming ideas into reality as against talking about how to do it.

In another study, Ambad (2020) found that entrepreneurship education is the process of or series of activities which aims to enable an individual to assimilate and develop knowledge, skills, abilities, values and understanding that are not simply related to a narrow field of activity but which allow a broad range of problems to be defined, analyzed and solved. It emphasizes on teaching people or citizens with the passion and desired skills needed to create an entrepreneurial firm and guide the firm successfully via its initial stage to maturity stage. It seeks to provide students with the knowledge, skills and motivation to encourage entrepreneurial success in a variety of settings (Azuma, (2018).

Another study by Tume (2019) found entrepreneurship education as the systematic development of skills, knowledge and attitudes demanded by an individual to perform adequately in a given business or occupational oriented opportunities for improved performance and competitiveness of organizations. The study concluded that the need for entrepreneurship education comes to the surface when businesses (including agro based ones) have to improve on their effectiveness, efficiency and improve their competitive advantage. Sustainable competitive advantage can be achieved when entrepreneurship education exposes learners to discover and implement skills and capabilities that are creative enough creating competition in a long time (Bharawaj, Varadarajan & Fahy, 1993).

Confirming the positive effect of entrepreneurship education on competitive advantage, Awever, (2019) established in their study that Entrepreneurship education has also been described for its possible role in creating sustainable competitive advantage for organizations. More specifically, organization must possess the ability to effectively and efficiently exploit the full potential of its resources and ensure they acquire entrepreneurship education in order to develop and maintain all competitive advantages (Awever, 2019).

Entrepreneurship Education as also been confirmed as a fundamental principle of competitive advantage (Vaase, 2019). In other words, with entrepreneurship education, staff are exposed to discovering themselves and their skills to make value from them they can get sustainable competitive advantage. To have a sustainable competitive advantage, organization should realize the importance of entrepreneurship education and subject its employees to it (Vaase, 2019).

3.0 Methodology

This section presents the methods, process and procedures used to investigate the effect of entrepreneurial education on competitiveness of small businesses in Nigeria.

3.1 Research Design

The study adopted a survey research design. This survey research design is considered important since it helped the researcher collect systematic data from different respondents at the same time. This design was quantitative to allow for descriptive and inferential analysis.

This allowed the researcher to collect different views of the respondents which were used to achieve objectives of the study. The study was domiciled in Benue State.

The population of this study is made up of 34 owners/managers of selected agro based small businesses in the study area. Needed data was collected with the aid of self designed research questionnaire.

To measure reliability of the instrument, a Cronbach's alpha was used for this purpose. This was done through test-retest method after an interval of two weeks. A Cronbach's alpha value higher than 0.7 indicates internal consistency of the instrument. Cronbach alphas were produced for the sub scale and the results are presented in Table 1. The results show Cronbach's alphas ranging from 0.768 to 0.908. These alpha coefficients are all higher than the conventional level of 0.7, suggesting that each sub-scale used in the study had acceptable internal consistency and hence reliable in measuring what they were designed to measure.

Table 2: Reliability Test Result

Variable	Items	Cronbach's	Alpha
Entrepreneurship Education	4		.763
Competitiveness	5		.876
Overall Cronbach's Alpha			.833

Source: SPSS Output, 2022.

3.2 Model Specification

In this study performance, the regression model was developed for the study and the implicit modified form of the model is given as:

$$\text{COMP} = f(\text{ED}) \quad (1)$$

where:

COMP = Competitiveness (dependent variable)

ED = Entrepreneurship Education (independent variable)

$$\text{COMP} = b_0 + b_1 \text{ED} + \varepsilon \quad (2)$$

where;

b_0 = intercept of the mode (Constant)

α = Constant

b_4 = parameter estimate

ε = error term

3.10 Data Analysis Techniques

Collected data was coded and entered into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive and inferential statistical techniques will be used for data presentation and analysis. In inferential statistics, multiple regression analysis was used to test the formulated hypotheses at 5 % level of significance.

Decision Rule

If the standard error of b_i [$S(b_i) > 1/2b_i$] we accept the null hypothesis, that is, we accept that the estimate b_i is not statistically significant at the 5% (0.05) level of significance. If the standard error of b_i [$S(b_i) < 1/2b_i$] we reject the null hypothesis, in other words, we accept that the estimate b_i is statistically significant at the 5% (0.05) level of significance.

Table 2: Respondents Views on Entrepreneurship Education

Item	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	ST.D
Entrepreneurship education is used by my company to expose staff on how to be competitive	34	1	4	3.41	0.783
My company has high competitiveness due to the Entrepreneurship education that the staff are exposed to	34	1	4	2.94	0.776
Entrepreneurship Education exposes the learners to divers kinds of skills which the company uses to be competitive.	34	1	4	3.09	0.753
There is enhanced competitiveness in the company occasioned by the type of Education the staff are exposed to	34	1	4	3.32	0.768

Source: Field Survey, 2022.

The result in Table 2 shows that the small businesses studied are involved in Entrepreneurship Education (Mean = 3.10), Entrepreneurship education is used in my company to expose staff on how to acquire EM Practices (mean = 3.41), My company has high competitiveness due to the type of education that the staff are exposed to (mean = 2.94), Entrepreneurship Education exposes the learners to divers kinds of EM which the company uses to be competitive. (mean = 3.09) and There is enhanced competitiveness in the company occasioned by the type of Education the staff are exposed to (3.32). This result implies that Entrepreneurship Education has significant effect on competitiveness of Small businesses studied in the study area.

Table 3: Respondents Views on Competitiveness

Item	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	ST.D
There is higher percentage increase in competitive advantage in my company as a result of exposure from Entrepreneurship Education	34	1	4	3.24	0.741
Entrepreneurship Education has properly positions our staff towards achieving competitive advantage in our Agro based company	34	1	4	3.21	0.770
Competitive advantage of has improved in our company because of proper built up of our staff from Entrepreneurship education	34	2	4	3.26	0.511
Entrepreneurship Education exposes the educated to different skills which are used in achieving competitive advantage by companies.	34	1	4	3.24	0.741
With Entrepreneurship Education, staff are able to properly discover their abilities and use same to achieve competitive advantage for their company.	34	1	4	3.06	0.649

Source: Field Survey, 2022.

The result as presented in table 3 above shows respondents views on competitiveness of small businesses in the study area. Majority of the respondents indicated that There is increase in competitive advantage higher percentage in my company as a result of exposure from Entrepreneurship Education (mean = 3.24), Entrepreneurship Education has properly positions our staff towards achieving competitive advantage in our Agro based company mean = 3.21), Competitive advantage of has improved in our company because of proper built up of our staff from Entrepreneurship education (mean = 3.26), Entrepreneurship Education exposes the educated to different skills which are used in achieving competitive advantage by companies. (mean = 3.24) and With Entrepreneurship Education, staff are able to properly discover their abilities and use same to achieve competitive advantage for their company (Mean = 3.06).

Table 4: Model Summary

R	R-Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Waston
.842 ^a	.708	.668	.344	2.0773

a. Predictors (Constant), Entrepreneurship Education

b. Dependent Variable: Competitiveness

Source: Field Survey, 2022.

The result from Table 4 shows that coefficient of determination (R square) explains the variation in the dependent variable due to changes in the independent variable. The R square value of .708 is an indication that there was variation of 70.8% in competitiveness of small businesses studied due to changes in Entrepreneurship Education at 95% confidence interval. Also, the value of R (.668) from Table 4 shows that there was a strong relationship between the study variables.

Table 5: Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	8.335	2	2.084	17.619	.000 ^b
Residual	3.430	31	.118		
Total	11.765	33			

a. Dependent Variable: Competitiveness

b. Predictors (Constant), Entrepreneurship Education

Source: Field Survey, 2022.

The result from the ANOVA statistics in Table 5 indicates that the processed data, which is the population parameters, had a significance level of .000 which shows that the data is ideal for making a conclusion on the population's parameter as the value of significance (p-value) is less than 5%. This implies that Entrepreneurship Education has significant effect on competitiveness of small business in the study area. The significance value was less than 0.05 which indicates that the model was statistically significant ($F = 17.619$ $P = .000$).

4.2 Test of the study's hypothesis

H_0 : Entrepreneurship Education has no significant effect on the competitiveness of small businesses in the study area.

To test this hypothesis, the strength of the effect of Entrepreneurship Education on the competitiveness of small businesses in the study area was measured by the calculated p-value = .000 at a significance level (α) of 0.05. Since the computed p-value is less than the significance level (α) of 0.05 ($p\text{-value } .000 < \alpha 0.05$), the null hypothesis was rejected. With the above

findings, the study had no option than to conclude that Entrepreneurship Education has significant effect on the competitiveness of small businesses in the study area.

4.3 Discussion of Findings

4.3.1 Effect of Entrepreneurship Education on the competitive advantage of Agro based small businesses in Benue state was empirically examined. Analysis of the data collected from the respondents revealed that Entrepreneurship Education has significant effect on competitive advantage of Agro based small businesses in the study area. Regression analysis was used to test the hypothesis at 5% level of significance and the p-value (0.000) was lower than the significance level. This can be statistically given as $P\text{-value } 0.000 < \alpha = 0.05$. The result of this study is in agreement with Itodo, (2021) whose study showed that Entrepreneurship Education has significant effect on the competitiveness of small businesses in the study area.

5.0 Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Summary of Findings

This study examined the effect of Entrepreneurship Education on the Competitiveness of Small businesses in Benue State. The findings from the study revealed Entrepreneurship education has significant effect on competitiveness of small businesses in Benue state ($P\text{-value } .000 < \alpha 0.05$).

The study therefore had no option than to conclude that entrepreneurship Education has significant effect on competitive advantage of Agro based small businesses in Benue State. Based on findings of the study, it was recommended (among other) that in order to create a successful competitive advantage, Management of Agro based small businesses in the study area should be more devoted on ensuring that their staff benefit from Entrepreneurship education to maintaining and strengthening their competitiveness. This will position their competitiveness better.

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