



Internship Programme and Entrepreneurial Skills Development of Business Education Students in Rivers State Universities

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ABSTRACT

This study focused on Internship programme as an enhancing tool for entrepreneurial development among Business Education Students in Rivers State Universities. Two specific objectives, research questions and hypotheses guided the study. The population of the study consists of 110 Business Education postgraduate students in the two state universities offering Business Education. Due to the manageable size of the population no sampling was done. The instrument used for data collection was a questionnaire developed by the researcher and was validated by two Lecturers from the Department of Business Education and one Measurement and Evaluation expert all of Rivers State University. Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMCC) was used to determine the reliability of the instrument and a coefficient index of 0.89 was obtained. Out of the 110 copies of the instrument distributed only 98 copies were retrieved and used for analysis. Mean and Standard Deviation were used to answer the research questions, while t-test statistical tool was used for the analysis of the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The findings of the study showed that postgraduate students in Rivers State Universities agreed that structured supervision enhances entrepreneurial development; it also revealed that opportunity to observe professionals through internship helps to build credibility and acquiring of new skills which enhances entrepreneurial development among Business Education students. Based on the finding of the study it was recommended that administrators should create awareness for students to participate in internship programmes. Also all Business Education postgraduate and undergraduate students should be mentored by professionals to build their self-confidence and broaden their knowledge.

Keywords: Structured Supervision, Mentorship, Entrepreneurial Development

Introduction

The transmutation of life stages of a student to a professional is not always very simple. Students are faced with lots of challenges when they enter into professional life. They are required to adjust themselves according to the professional environment by implementing their conceptual knowledge in the world of work. Usually, business students use their skills and theoretical business knowledge in their first jobs, by integrating conceptual knowledge and training through academic internship programmes, which will facilitate to better implement their concepts at the workplace. Loretto (2021) is of the view that internship is an opportunity employers offer to students interested in gaining work experience in specific industries and an important step to building a solid career, it is also an official programme offered by organizations to help train and provide work experience to students and recent graduates. Academic internships are bridges to link the theory and practice by taking part in supervised and scheduled work. Through internship programmes students are well supervised and a significant relationship exists between structured supervision and high job performance (Nwosu, Ohuruogu & Ekpechu, 2021).

This internship programme helps a graduate student to be acquainted with his/her job responsibilities and job culture. Experience is becoming a crucial factor for employers when deciding who gets their foot in the door. It's strongly advised that students and graduates take the opportunity to complete a period of work experience to ensure that they have a competitive advantage over their peers; and that's where an internship can make all the difference. An internship is a limited-time work programme offered by an organization to an individual, often a student or fresh graduate, looking to build experience or skills in a particular field. A person accepted into an internship programme is called an intern. Internships provide students with practical experience, which cannot be fully simulated in the classroom (Elarde & Chong, 2012). Consequently, interns are better prepared to cope with the challenges of the work environment and their job performance may be accelerated (Maertz, Stoeberl, & Marks, 2014). Moreover, internships provide students with the opportunity to apply the skills that they learn in classroom settings in the world of work (Green, Graybeal, & Madison, 2011). "What distinguishes internships from volunteers and other forms of active learning is that there is a

degree of supervision and self-study that allows students to ‘learn by doing’ and to reflect upon that learning in a way that it achieves certain learning goals and objectives. Feedback for improvement and the development or refinement of learning goals is also essential. Internships are temporary affairs which attract those with no existing experience but looking to gain some expertise in a particular field. Internships can last from a couple of days or weeks to several months in length. Some companies provide six-month or year-long internships to give interns a comprehensive learning experience, as well as to reduce the burden of constantly locating new intern replacements. Others might offer prospective candidates a week or month-long internship to provide a simple overview of the business and determine if the intern and the company are fit for possibly moving forward together. Internships can be done in a range of sectors, including sales, marketing, engineering, graphic design, management and many more. Throughout an internship, students will be able to develop a variety of soft skills, including communication skills, personal effectiveness, presentation skills, creative problem solving and influencing skills. One of the best things about internship is that it gives an opportunity to test drive a potential career because they enable students to accumulate practical skills that can only be gleaned through on-the-job training better if structured supervision and mentorship are applied. Structured supervision and mentorship are twin action activities, if applied yields a positive achievement or attainment of a desired goal as it is related to skills development.

Supervision means establishing one’s wider vision, above vision, supreme vision and seeing other’s work carefully. From a management point of view, supervision means overseeing the subordinates or workers or members at work to ensure that work is being performed as required, directed and assigned based upon work plan. Virtually, it refers to the guidance and control of subordinates. The subordinates are supervised by the manager just to know whether they have performed the job according to plan, policy, programme, instruction and scheduled time or not. This supervision is a continuing activity and it is performed at every level of management. Haynes, Cory and Moulton (2003) opined that the “primary aim of supervision is to create a context in which the supervisee can acquire the experience needed to become an independent professional”. Adding that supervision is “artful, but it is an emerging formal arrangement with specific expectations, roles, responsibilities and skills.” Structured supervision involves close guidance as it is a vital tool in business success, especially for entrepreneurs who need to be guided by experienced professionals in their fields or businesses. In the past close guidance was restricted to road side training between the master and apprentice; but today it has grown to the level of creativity.

Structured supervision is beneficial to both the supervisor and the supervisee as it provides:

- a. An opportunity to explore the emotional impact of providing career development services
- b. Developing a greater awareness and understanding of the career development role
- c. Increasing capacity to reflect and link knowledge, practice and skills development – increasing confidence
- d. Facilitation of learning and professional development, helping individuals create a meaningful plan for their professional development
- e. Creating a working alliance between supervisee and supervisor that allows for on-going dialogue and development for the individual and organization.

Mentorship is a relationship concept. A mentor is a more experienced, knowledgeable and trusted person who gives a younger or less experienced person help and advice over a period of time. This relationship in which the more experienced or knowledgeable person helps to guide a less experienced or less knowledgeable person is called mentorship and the process involved is referred to as mentoring. Mentoring has also been considered a personal enhancement strategy through which one person facilitates the development of another by sharing his/her professional competence. It allows the “learner to build skills and knowledge while attaining goals for carrier development” (Klinge, 2015, Defense Logistics Agency, 2018). It is a fantastic way of providing interns and employees with valuable experience. It should be noted, that mentoring is more than just giving advice on how to work more effectively or handle a specific problem. It involves the mentor taking personal interest in seeing that a mentee developed the right talent, skills, values, attitudes, expertise and knowledge needed to succeed, to have a successful career and contribute as much as possible to the organization, society and the nation. Amesi and Akpomi (2013), viewed that mentoring relationship help foster risk tolerance in innovative individuals, so entrepreneurs spirit and ability become the primary focus for entrepreneur’s success. Mentoring protégé relationships are imperative in the contemporary business environment as they form necessary alliances that potentate and establish a dynamic business presence. Mentoring is a very crucial and promising strategy for the pursuit of and finding solutions to the problems of academic excellence, employee development and nation building. Excellence, including academic excellence does not occur by chance. As Rodriguez (2015) noted, “it is the result of high intention, sincere effort, intelligent direction and skillful execution”. Mentoring is vital in achieving academic excellence because it helps students to proactively navigate learning in higher education by role – modeling, effective study habits, offering supportive and collaborative environments for good teaching, learning, research, and innovation likewise extension services. It also helps students, amateur researchers, less experienced and less knowledgeable staff to develop into more confident, self-directed independent learners and researchers. Here, mentoring serves to promote academic excellence and serves as a useful strategy for manpower development. Dudman, Lowbrrigde and Stevens (2011) identified four types of mentoring relationships, which includes:

- i. face-to-face, one –to-one mentoring
- ii. face –to-face group mentoring (peer mentoring):
- iii. Telephone mentoring and
- iv. E-mentoring

These four types of mentorship if applied objectively will enhance entrepreneur skill development among Business Education students in Rivers State Universities. The opportunity to acquire skills and experience through internships reinforces self-efficacy, which in turn influences entrepreneurial intent. Internships are useful for developing soft skills and interpersonal skills, such as professionalism, cultural sensitivity, time management and integrity, that are not generally part of the formal tertiary education curriculum (Holyoak, 2013; Shoenfelt, Stone & Kottke, 2013). Entrepreneurship Development Programme (EDP) is described by Asogwa and Dim (2016) as a purposeful intervention by an adult (the teacher) in the life of a learner to impart entrepreneurial qualities and skills to enable the learner to survive in the world of business". Its aim is to equip learners with skills, knowledge and disposition that can help them develop or implement innovative social or business plans. According to Thaddeus (2012), Entrepreneurship development programme refers to the process of enhancing the capacity of recipients through structured training and institutional building programme. From the general view, entrepreneurship development programme is increasingly recognized as important driver of economic growth, generating employment, fostering innovation and poverty reduction through the empowerment of young men and women. Therefore Business Education students through internship programme can start as business incubators which will be developed in the future. Okiridu and Amadi (2017) sees business incubators as location in which entrepreneurs can be proactive, have value-added support, and access to critical tools, information, education, contacts, resources and capital that may be unavailable, inaccessible and unknown. Entrepreneurship development is the means of enhancing the knowledge and skill of entrepreneurs through several classroom coaching, programmes, and training. The main point of the development process is to strengthen and increase the number of entrepreneurs. This entrepreneur development process helps new firms or ventures get better in achieving their goals, improve business and the nation's economy. Another essential factor of this process is to improve the capacity to manage, develop, and build a business enterprise keeping in mind the risks related to it. In simple words, the entrepreneurship development process is about supporting entrepreneurs to advance their skills with the help of training and coaching classes. It encourages them to make better judgments and take a sensible decision for all business activities; these internship programmes do not only improve students' personal skills but also polish their professional growth and experience.

Statement of the Problem

Internship programme is a training opportunity arising from the collaboration of the institutions and the industrial workplace for the less experienced ones (students) to learn from the knowledgeable (masters), the needed skills to be self-employed or to be employed after graduation. The Nigerian universities for the past two decades has been graduating students that has no space in the industries to exhibit what they learnt in the number of years of their stay in school. If this problem is not checked and control, it means that the spiral growth of unemployment rate in the country will be worse than what we have today. Lack of space to accommodate the Nigerian graduate is attributed to many factors such as failure of many companies and industries; the worst is the inability of the students to acquire the needed skills during the course of their studies. This has resulted to the graduates hovering around the streets in search of white collar jobs that are nowhere to be found. The expectancy of Business Education graduates is a repertoire of skills for job creation, being self-reliant and not job seekers. Students' internship engagement in Students Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES) has experienced a setback due to the fact that the supervisors do not apply structured supervision and mentorship during the training programme. As a result of this, the students are left with little knowledge, skills or nothing within the period under study. This is the reason why the global innovation index (2015) ranked the country very low on innovativeness. The aftermath of this anomalies stems on poor entrepreneurial and professional development hence they cannot multitask due to no valuable experience. Structured supervision and mentorship are twin action activities that if applied can yield the needed result hence the study.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to:

1. Determine the extent to which structured supervision enhances entrepreneurial development among Business Education students in Rivers State universities.
2. Determine the extent to which mentorship enhances entrepreneurial development among Business Education students in Rivers State universities.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

1. To what extent does structured supervision enhance entrepreneurial development among Business Education students in Rivers State universities?
2. To what extent does mentorship enhance entrepreneurial development among Business Education students in Rivers State universities?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance

1. There is no significant difference between Business Education Students of Rivers State University and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education on the extent structured supervision enhances entrepreneurial development.
2. There is no significant difference between Business Education Students of Rivers State University and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education on the extent mentorship enhances entrepreneurial development.

Methods

The study area is Rivers State owned universities offering Business Education. Descriptive survey research design was adopted for this study. The population consists of one hundred and ten (110) 2020/2021 Business Education postgraduate students in Rivers State University and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, this comprised of sixty-one students from Rivers State University and forty-nine students from Ignatius Ajuru University of Education. The entire population was used due to the manageable size of the population. The instrument used to elicit information for the study is a researcher's made questionnaire titled: Internship and Students Entrepreneurial Development (ISED) structured on a four-point rating scale of Very High Extent (VHE), High Extent (HE), Moderate Extent (ME) and Low Extent (LE). The instrument was validated by two Business Educators and one Measurement and Evaluation expert all in Rivers State University. Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was used to determine the reliability of the instrument and a coefficient index of 0.89 was obtained. Out of the 110 copies of the questionnaire distributed only ninety-eight copies were retrieved by the researcher. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions while t-test statistics was used to analyze the formulated hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Research Question 1: To what extent does structured supervision enhances Entrepreneurial Development among Business Education students in Rivers State universities?

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation on the extent structured supervision enhances entrepreneurial development among Business Education students in Rivers State universities.

S/N	Statements	RSU = 57			IAUE = 41		
		Mean \bar{X}	Standard Deviation Sd ₁	Remarks	Mean \bar{X}	Standard Deviation Sd ₂	Remarks
1	Was properly supervised during my SIWES and this helped me develop problem solving skills.	3.00	0.92	High extent	3.29	0.97	High extent
2	Was properly supervised during my SIWES and this helped me to identify my personal strength and weakness.	3.11	0.93	High extent	3.32	0.78	High extent
3	Was properly supervised during my SIWES and this led to identification of personal goals and objectives	2.81	1.02	High extent	3.00	0.88	High extent
4	SIWES supervision helped me to demonstrate the ability to make choices in a positive manner.	2.95	1.11	High extent	3.02	1.05	High extent
5	Structured supervision during SIWES gave me the opportunity to discuss any skills gap.	3.12	0.77	High extent	3.07	1.07	High extent
6	Was properly supervised during my SIWES and this helped increase my understanding of current circumstances.	3.09	1.06	High extent	2.95	0.94	High extent
	Total Mean/Std Dev.=	18.07	5.81		18.65	5.86	
	Grand Mean/Std Dev.=	3.01	0.97	High extent	3.11	0.95	High extent

Source: Researcher's Field Survey (2022)

The result in table 4.1 has a grand mean of 3.01 and 3.11 respectively which indicates that structured supervision during internship programme provides students with the needed skills and tools that enhances entrepreneurial development. Item 6 indicates that structured supervision provides an opportunity for students to be able to manage time and priority accordingly.

Research Question 2: To what extent does mentorship enhances Entrepreneurial Development among Business Education students in Rivers State universities?

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation on the extent mentorship enhances Entrepreneurial Development among Business Education students in Rivers State universities.

S/N	Statements	RSU = 57			IAUE = 41		
		Mean \bar{X}	Standard Deviation Sd ₁	Remarks	Mean \bar{X}	Standard Deviation Sd ₂	Remarks
1	Was encouraged and empowered in personal development.	2.79	1.27	High extent	3.22	0.95	High extent
2	It helped me to identify and achieve career goals.	3.26	0.81	High extent	3.59	0.58	Very high extent
3	It helped me to identify and correct gaps in generic skills and knowledge..	2.98	0.91	High extent	3.02	0.90	High extent
4	It increased my confidence.	3.21	0.87	High extent	3.27	1.08	High extent
5	It provide an access to a role model and also gained logical insight.	3.07	1.07	High extent	2.49	1.11	High extent
	Total Mean/Std Dev.=	15.32	4.92	High	15.59	4.62	High
	Grand Mean/Std Dev.=	3.06	0.99	extent	3.12	0.92	extent

Source: Researcher's Field Survey (2022)

Table 2 has a grand mean of 3.06 and 3.12 with a grand standard deviation of 0.99 and 0.922 respectively. This result shows that to a high extent mentorship enhances entrepreneurial development of Business Education students and there is no deviation between Rivers State university and Ignatius Ajuru students in the acquisition of the needed skills.

Hypotheses:

Hypotheses 1: There is no significance difference in the mean scores of Business Education Students of Rivers State University (RSU) and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education (IAUE) on the extent to which structured supervision enhances Entrepreneurial Development.

Table 3: Computation of difference in mean scores of Business Education Students in RSU and IAUE on the extent to which structured supervision enhances Entrepreneurial Development.

Respondents	N	\bar{x}	SD	t-cal.	t. crit.	df	α	decision
RSU	57	3.0	0.97					
IAUE	41	3.1	0.95	1.598	1.661	96	0.05	Retain

Source: Researcher's Field Survey (2022)

The data in table 3 showed the t-calculated value of 1.598 as against the critical value of 1.661. The null hypothesis was upheld because t-critical is greater than the t-calculated. This implies that Business Education postgraduate students do not differ significantly with respect to structured supervision in entrepreneurial development.

Hypotheses 2: There is no significance difference in the mean score of Business Education Students of Rivers State University (RSU) and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education (IAUE) on the extent to which mentorship enhances Entrepreneurial Development.

Table 4: Computation of difference in mean scores of Business Education Students in RSU and IAUE on the extent to which mentorship enhances Entrepreneurial Development.

Respondents	N	\bar{x}	SD	t-cal.	t. crit.	df	α	decision
RSU	57	3.1	0.99					
IAUE	41	3.1	0.92	1.193	1.661	96	0.05	Retain

Source: Researcher's Field Survey (2022)

The data in table 4 showed the t-calculated value of 1.193 and critical table value of 1.661 at 96 degree of freedom. The null hypothesis was upheld because t-critical value is greater than the t-calculated value at 0.05 level of significance. This implies that Business Education postgraduate students do not differ significantly as per mentorship in entrepreneurial development.

Discussion of Findings

Findings of the study revealed that Business Education postgraduate students in Rivers State Universities agreed that problem solving skills, identification of personal strengths, identification of goals and objectives, ability to make choices in a positive manner and ability to discuss skill gap are some of the components that constitute structured supervision during internship. It shows that during internship, students acquire soft skills which in turn influences their lives. Students use these acquired skills to create jobs for themselves, rather than waiting on government or private sectors to create jobs. The findings are in line with Nwosu, Ohuruogu and Ekpechu (2021) who found out that there is a positive significant relationship between structured supervision, job performance and entrepreneurial development. The test of hypothesis one indicates that Rivers State university Business Education students and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education students do not differ significantly as regards Structured Supervision and Entrepreneurial Development. Findings of the study showed that Business Education students perceived identification of career goals, identification and correction of gaps in generic skills and knowledge, increased confidence and gained logical insight are all attributes of mentorship, the efficiency of mentorship will promote entrepreneurial development among these students that are able to identify and learn from a mentor in terms of their chosen careers. The findings showed that through mentoring, students will possess the ability to execute tasks at hand which is very fundamental in terms of job creation for self and others, because the students will develop and maintain a broader perspective on career options and opportunities. This result is in line with the views of Leah, Jennifer, Harris and Balreen (2019) who found out that the mentees accrued several benefits from participating in the mentorship programme, the mentees also gained a more realistic view about the workplace and their potential career options, and received important psychosocial support from their mentor. Also the analysis for the hypothesis two showed that there was no significant difference in the mean rating of Rivers State University and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education regarding Mentorship and Entrepreneurial Development. The influence of structured supervision and mentoring for Entrepreneurial development of Business Education Postgraduate Students during internship is to a high Extent. The result also showed that there is no significant difference in the mean scores of Post graduate students of Rivers State University and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education on the extent Structured Supervision and mentoring enhance Entrepreneurial Development.

Conclusion

Internships are important for Business Education students to make connections between their traditional coursework and the workplace. This study found that students place a great value on internship experience which in-turn enhances their entrepreneurial mindset and goals. The value of the internship will be maximized if educators can provide the appropriate structure and integrate the experience with the academic background of the student, this approach will help to address the criticisms of Business Education students and Business schools as being overly theoretical and abstract. Universities now have considerable evidence to expand and enhance their respective placements in organizational sites where partnership can flourish.

Recommendations

On the basis of the results, the following recommendations were made:

1. The administrators of Business Education programmes should create awareness for students to involve more in internship programmes in order to engage in structured supervision as this will obviously broaden students' knowledge in terms of Entrepreneurial Development.
2. Business Education postgraduate and undergraduate students should at least be mentored by professionals to building their self-confidence and broaden their knowledge.

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