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PERCEIVED INFLUENCE OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY ON ENTREPRENEURSHIP AMONG ACCOUNTING EDUCATION GRADUATES IN ANAMBRA STATE

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Abstract

This study examined the perceived influence of information and communication technology on entrepreneurship skills among accounting education graduates in Anambra State. Three research questions guided the study. This study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The population of the study is made up of 148 accounting education PG students in the two public universities in Anambra State (87 accounting education PG students from Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka and 61 accounting education PG students from Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Igbariam for 2023/2024 session). The entire population of 148 accounting education PG students was used since the size is considered manageable. Therefore, there is no sampling for the study. The questionnaire is titled "Perceived Influence of ICT on Entrepreneurship Skills among Accounting Education Graduates" (PIICTESAEG). Descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation was used to analyze data to answer the research questions and determine the homogeneity or heterogeneity of the respondents' mean. It was found that accounting education graduates agreed that ICT on entrepreneurship created an enabling business environment, boosted production of goods and services in enterprises; and influenced staff development. Based on the findings, it was recommended amongst others that entrepreneurs should organize on-the-job training and offer opportunities for in-service training to their staff to make them more competent in the use of ICT.

Keywords: ICT, Entrepreneurship, Entrepreneurship Skills, Accounting Education, Graduates

Introduction

In all countries of the world, education has been recognized as the engine for economic growth and as a catalyst for national transformation. The last decade has witnessed the powerful emergence of entrepreneurship research worldwide. There seems to be widespread recognition of entrepreneurship as the engine driving the economy and society of most nations (Alberti, Sciascia & Poli, 2018). Nowadays both scholars and policy makers are becoming aware of the importance of the educational system for entrepreneurship. This awareness is driven by the understanding that education is not only about imparting knowledge but also about equipping students with the skills and mindset necessary to navigate and thrive in the business world. Similarly, Nabi et al. (2017) found that exposure to entrepreneurial education positively influences students' entrepreneurial intentions and self-efficacy.

Entrepreneurship is the process of creating something new with value by devoting the necessary time and effort, assuming the accompanying financial, psychic, and social risks, and receiving the resulting rewards of monetary and personal satisfaction and independence (Hisrich & Peters, 2020). It is the ability to take calculated risks with a view of generating profit, typically through the creation of a new business venture or the rejuvenation of an existing business. It involves recognizing opportunities, harnessing resources, and managing risks to create value for stakeholders (Morris, Kuratko & Schindehutt, 2020). Entrepreneurs see change as the norm and as healthy. Usually, they do not bring about the change themselves, but they exploit it as an opportunity. Hannon (2017) noted that entrepreneurship has different short term and long term results in the society as it has partially addressed the challenges of unemployment, economic recession, fluctuations in international trade cycles and poverty up to this millennium.

Entrepreneurship equips individuals with the skills, knowledge, attitudes and competencies necessary to identify business opportunities, take risks, build business relationships, and succeed as entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurship involves learning the skills to take risks and establish a business, developing strategies and executing them with passion and persistence. Preparation for entrepreneurship involves identifying economic opportunities, conducting feasibility analyses, and planning for the enterprise's growth. Entrepreneurship develops when a person organizes and manages a commercial undertaking, combining diligence, innovation, risk-taking readiness,

opportunity sense, resource mobilization, goal-oriented, and dedication to growth and excellence. According to Buba, Rimamnde, Umma, and Mallo (2015), the essence of entrepreneurship is to help students acquire a deeper understanding of entrepreneurship, equip them with necessary entrepreneurial skills, and prepare them to act as entrepreneurs and managers of new businesses.

Entrepreneurship skills include the capability to identify market opportunities, develop business plans, secure financing, manage a growing business, and innovate continuously. These skills are critical for both starting new ventures and sustaining existing businesses. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2015) defined entrepreneurship skills as a set of competencies that enable individuals to create, develop and run new ventures successfully. These include the ability to take calculated risks, the capacity for innovation, the ability to motivate and lead teams, and the skill to communicate effectively. The OECD's definition underscores leadership, risk-taking and communication as essential entrepreneurial skills. Invariably, the influence of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) on entrepreneurship skills among accounting education graduates cannot be under-emphasized. Entrepreneurship gives rise to innovations. Nagy (2016) pointed out that investment in Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) and use, can affect innovation. ICT according to UNDP (2015) refers to the full range of electronic technologies and techniques used to manage information and knowledge. In this study the term ICT is not referring to all the media currently available but more restrictedly to the recent computer technologies, internet, computer and cell phones. ICT have become the modern-day strategy to capture the market because of the potentials it can offer to enhance entrepreneurship.

ICT has a great role to play to enhance entrepreneurship skills among youths. Bartelsman and Hinloopen (2018) pointed out that the use of ICT could have several impacts on productivity. It might help more productive enterprises gain market share. The use of ICT may help enterprises expand their product range, customize the services offered or respond better to client demand and to innovate. Moreover ICT may help reduce inefficiency in the use of capital and labour by reducing inventories. All these effects might lead to higher productivity. According to Porter (2017), ICT influence on entrepreneurship among vocational graduates does the following: creating an enabling business environment, enhance marketing of goods and services, and provides its employees with professional development.

One important influence of ICT on entrepreneurship is creating an enabling environment. According to Lall (2021) stated that a business environment can be seen from a policy perspective. This means that while macro policies are needed which include ensuring a stable currency and exchange rates, controlling inflation, promoting open markets by gradual cuts in tariff rates, providing effective infrastructure and protecting property rights. successful industrial development is based on market-friendly measures for increasing efficiency and interaction of meso-level institutions. These measures should follow a decentralized, flexible, bottom-up and tailor-made approach. United Nations Economic and Social Commission (UNESC) (2015) holds that creating an enabling environment means addressing in a holistic manner, the various policy, legal, market and social considerations that interact both at domestic and global levels to create fertile conditions for ICT-based business.

Another important influence of ICT on entrepreneurship is in the area of enhance the marketing of goods and services. According to UNDP (2015) ICT has the potential to facilitate the development of integrated and scalable solutions in both the public and private sectors that can allow for streamlining and cost-effective delivery of social goods and services; particularly in the case of healthcare and education. ICT has also been important in increasing the sustainability and effectiveness of production cooperatives and micro enterprises such as milk, embroidery and craft cooperatives and raising income levels of poor women. The informal sector tends to be greatly underserved in terms of social security and services and ICT is also being used to make it possible. ICT can provide new and more efficient method of production, bringing unattainable market within reach of the poor and improving delivery of government services. Again, OECD (2018a) pointed out that accounting education graduates who tend to adopt e-commerce, it will reduce transaction costs, increase transaction speed and reliability and exact maximum value from transactions in their value chains.

Finally, the influence of ICT as regards accounting education graduates' training is another important factor to be considered in this study. UNESCO (2018b) observed that to effectively harness the power of the new information and communication technologies, governments around the world are focusing on strategies to increase access to and improve the quality of accounting education.

Harnessing the power of information technology is not really about acquiring the least equipment and software. It is about thorough evaluation of needs and process improvement opportunities. According to Jide (2016) in the digital age, Nigeria needs quality manpower and investing seriously in human capital. This means focusing on increased computer literacy and IT professionalism. The level of IT literacy among Nigerian graduates (accounting education graduates inclusive) is still abysmally low due to grinding poverty in the land and ignorance. Computer education must be accompanied with serious manpower planning in the ICT sector.

Accounting education is viewed as an organized process carried out by the responsible authorities, primarily universities, and through this process, the learner is provided with basic knowledge and the necessary scientific and practical capabilities that enable him (Al Dulamy & Hamad, 2021). It is an educational programme to provide learners with essential knowledge and practical skills in financial accounting, auditing, taxation, and management accounting. Azria (2017) asserts that this education meets labour market demands by producing qualified graduates who support economic and social development. Graduates are individuals who have completed a course of study, earning a degree, diploma, or certificate, signifying their academic achievements (Merriam-Webster, 2024). Thus, accounting education graduates are those who have completed formal programmes in accounting, earning relevant qualifications.

Existing literatures have proven that ICT, if well used for training has potential to aid materials to be presented in multiple media for multichannel learning and skills acquisition (Itegboje, Adigun and Oyeyinka, 2021, Love and Irani, 2021). It motivates and engages learners in the learning process, brings abstract concepts to life and enhances critical thinking as well as other higher levels of cognitive skills and processes. ICT in training provides opportunities for learners to practice basic skills on their own time and at their own pace while allowing them to use the information acquired to solve problems within their environment. Access is thus provided to world-wide information resources for instructors and learners alike, a platform for large scale information interchanges and research development beyond geographical boundaries (Haddad & Draxler, 2021).

Anambra State is home to several major educational institutions, including Nnamdi Azikiwe University (UNIZIK) and Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University (COOU), Igbariam, which offer accounting education programmes. These institutions are noted for their academic brilliance and have generated a large number of accounting graduates. The quality of education and emphasis on integrating ICT into the curriculum create an ideal setting for investigating the influence of ICT skills on entrepreneurship. Despite its economic vitality, Anambra State has issues including as unemployment and underemployment among graduates. Similarly, there are still obvious disadvantages of none utilization of ICT in businesses in Anambra State. The absence of ICT in business could lead to poor marketing of product, lack of access to information and collaboration among entrepreneurs in the business world. Jide (2016) has rightly pointed out that the disadvantages of lack of ICT skills need in Nigeria makes the need for ICT user, professionals and skills more crucial now than ever. The enormous disadvantages are hindering the effectiveness of ICT in developing the entrepreneurship mindset of accounting education graduates. Though digital literacy has become a necessity for all but it may be that majority in Nigeria lack basic ICT skills. This research can assist in determining influence of ICT skills in addressing these issues by allowing accounting graduates to start their own firms and possibilities. It is therefore against this background that the study determined the influence of information and communication technology skills on entrepreneurship among accounting education graduates in Anambra State.

Statement of the Problem

In the past accounting education graduates use obsolete but cheaper technologies such as typewriter and cyclostyling machines which are now filled with disadvantages in the present day of information and communication technology. These have negative implications for boosting of entrepreneurial skills. For example, with the use of these technologies for error correction, communication, document scanning and formatting are not possible. However, with the advent of ICT, it has been found that entrepreneurial skills are facilitated. ICT has great potentials in enhancing skills of entrepreneurs. It has facilitated training through on-line learning and helped in the area of enhanced business environment. To scan, organize and store documents are possible with computer but not with the old technologies used in business by some entrepreneurs.

Presently, ICT has become a cornerstone for innovation and entrepreneurial success. However, in

Anambra State, Nigeria, there is still limited empirical evidence on how ICT influence the entrepreneurial capabilities of accounting education graduates. Despite the integration of ICT in accounting education curriculum of universities, many graduates struggle to translate these skills into entrepreneurial ventures, which hampers their ability to contribute significantly to the local and national economy. Accounting education graduates are expected to possess a blend of accounting expertise and entrepreneurial acumen, enhanced by ICT proficiency. Yet, anecdotal evidence suggests disconnect between the ICT usage in accounting education and the practical application of entrepreneurship skills by its graduates. This gap may be due to inadequate practical training, insufficient exposure to real-world business environments, or a lack of emphasis on entrepreneurship skills within the accounting education framework. Given the critical role of entrepreneurship in economic development and job creation, understanding the perceived influence of ICT on the entrepreneurial endeavors of accounting graduates in Anambra State is essential. Therefore, this study specifically examined,

1. the perceived influence of ICT on entrepreneurship among accounting education graduates in creating an enabling business environment.
2. the perceived influence of ICT on entrepreneurship among accounting education graduates in enhancing marketing of goods and services.
3. the perceived influence of ICT on entrepreneurship among accounting education graduates for staff development.

Research Questions

1. What is the perceived influence of ICT on entrepreneurship among accounting education graduates in creating an enabling business environment?
2. What is the perceived influence of ICT on entrepreneurship among accounting education graduates in enhancing marketing of goods and services?
3. What is the perceived influence of ICT on entrepreneurship among accounting education graduates for staff development?

Methodology

This study was conducted in Anambra State. It adopted a descriptive survey research design. The population of the study is made up of 148 Accounting education PG students in the two public universities in Anambra State (97 accounting education PG students from Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka and 51 accounting education PG students from Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Igbariam for 2023/2023 session). It is understood that PG accounting education students are graduates. In order to accurately determine the population, PG students were used. The entire population of 148 Accounting Education PG students was used since the size is considered manageable. Therefore, there is no sampling for the study. The instrument for data collection was a self-developed questionnaire is titled "Perceived Influence of ICT on Entrepreneurship Skills among Accounting education Graduates Questionnaire" (PIICTESAEG). The instrument contained 20 items in three sections, A, B and C covering the three research questions, and structured on a four points rating scales of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD). Descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation was used to analyze data to answer the research questions and determine the homogeneity or heterogeneity of the respondents' mean.

Results

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation Scores on the Influence of ICT on Entrepreneurship among Accounting education Graduates in Creating an Enabling Business Environment

S/N	Items on ICT on entrepreneurship among accounting education graduates in creating an enabling business environment	X	SD	Remarks
1	Developing secured e-payment services	2.25	0.87	Disagree
2	Accessing the website of Corporate Affairs Commission for enterprise registration	2.66	1.14	Agree
3	Educating personnel on e-commerce	1.95	1.00	Disagree
4	Addressing issues related to cybercrimes, cyber security and scam	3.33	1.03	Agree
5	Addressing the cost of website maintenance	2.85	1.02	Agree
6	Lowering the cost of computer training of enterprise employees	3.31	0.90	Agree
7	Seeking sponsorship for computer training of enterprise employees	2.53	0.85	Agree
	Establishing fair treatments for cross-border business	2.85		Agree
	Cluster Mean			

Data in Table 1 revealed the item by item analysis of the influence of ICT on entrepreneurship among accounting education graduates in creating an enabling business environment. The analysis revealed that items 2, 4, 5, 6 and 7 with mean scores 2.66, 3.33, 2.55, 2.55, 3.31 and 2.53 respectively were rated agreed while other items were rated disagreed. This means that these items have positive influence on entrepreneurship among accounting education graduates in creating an enabling business environment. The cluster mean of 2.65 summarised that the respondents agreed that ICT on entrepreneurship created an enabling business environment. The standard deviation score ranging between 0.87 – 1.14 means that the respondents' mean scores were closely related.

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation Scores on the Influence of ICT on Entrepreneurship among Accounting education Graduates in Marketing Goods and Services

S/N	Items ICT on entrepreneurship among accounting education graduates in enhancing marketing of goods and services	X	SD	Remarks
8	Using internet for receiving and sending messages on existing goods and services	2.78	1.01	Agree
9	Using telephone for communication in business	2.79	1.04	Agree
10	Advertising products and services on the internet	2.67	1.03	Agree
11	Online purchase of goods and services	2.66	0.96	Agree
12	Using online price board to get better offers on supplies	2.66	0.99	Agree
13	Networking with other enterprises through the internet	2.72	1.02	Agree
14	Browsing to get information on the new methods of services and products from the internet.	2.57	1.03	Agree
	Cluster Mean	**2.72**		**Agree**

Data in Table 2 revealed the item by item analysis of the influence of ICT on entrepreneurship among accounting education graduates in enhancing marketing of goods. The analysis revealed that all the items 9 – 14 with mean scores 2.78, 2.79, 2.67, 2.66, 2.66, 2.72 and 2.57 respectively were rated agreed. This means that these items have a positive influence on enhancing marketing goods. The cluster mean of 2.72 summarily revealed that the respondents agreed that ICT on entrepreneurship enhanced marketing of goods. The standard deviation scores ranging from 0.96 – 1.04 means that that the respondents' mean scores were closely related.

Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviation Scores on the influence of ICT on Entrepreneurship among Accounting education Graduates for Staff Development

S/N	Items on ICT on entrepreneurship among accounting education graduates for staff development.	X	SD	Remarks
15	Using web-based lesson for staff training and development	3.41	0.54	Agree
16	Using cyber guide for staff training exercise	2.18	0.68	Disagree
17	Using multimedia presentations for staff training exercise	2.72	0.91	Agree
18	Using computer conferencing for staff training	2.07	0.86	Disagree
19	Using virtual classroom for staff training and growth	3.18	0.59	Agree
20	Using personalized course for staff training	2.98	0.91	Agree
	Cluster Mean	**2.76**		**Agree**

Data presented in Table 3 revealed the item by item analysis of the influence of ICT on entrepreneurship among accounting education graduates for staff development. The analysis revealed that items 15, 17, 19 and 20 with mean scores 3.41, 2.72, 3.18 and 2.98 were rated agreed while other items were rated disagreed. The cluster mean of 2.76 summarily revealed that the respondents agreed that ICT on entrepreneurship influenced staff development. The standard deviation scores ranging from 0.59 –

0.99 means that that the respondents' mean scores were closely related.

Discussion of the Findings

The influence of ICT on entrepreneurship among accounting education graduates in creating an enabling business environment

The finding in research question one revealed that accounting education graduates agreed that ICT on entrepreneurship created an enabling business environment. These environment include, educating personnel on ecommerce, lowing the cost of website maintenance, to improve computer and internet diffusion in the country, lowing the cost of computers, provision of business skills education and achieving favorable tax policies. The result of the study agrees with the findings of Al-Alawi, Sanosi and Althawadi (2021) that an economic environment which includes the increasing importance of human resources, new and improved technology and innovation has come to a center stage. The result also supported the finding of Okeke (2014) which noted that public policy together with ICT are the tool by which the government can help to create enabling business environment.

The influence of ICT on entrepreneurship among accounting education graduates in enhancing marketing of goods and services

The finding in research question two revealed that accounting education graduates agreed that ICT on entrepreneurship enhanced marketing of goods. Specifically advertising products and services on the internet, using internet for receiving or sending messages, typing and storing information in the computer, advertising employment opportunities in the internet and using satellite conference to share knowledge on new methods of production have enhanced marketing of goods and services. The result of this study lends credence to the findings of Mahesha and Robyn (2016) that ICT can provide new and more efficient method of production, bringing unattainable market within reach of the poor and improving delivery of government services. The finding is well corroborated to those of Gomes, Alves and Silva (2018) that technology creation, adaptation and innovation are important but technology diffusion and use may be even more important for developing countries.

The influence of ICT on entrepreneurship among accounting education graduates for staff development

The finding in research question three revealed that accounting education graduates agreed that ICT on entrepreneurship influenced staff development. The findings of this study indicate that entrepreneurs use web-based lessons, multimedia presentations and telecommuting project often in staff training. This is because these means of training are internet and computer based and are easily accessible to managers and staff. The result agrees with the study of Omotunde and Ajie (2017) that ICT has the potential to transform the nature of education, where and how learning takes place and the roles of students and teachers in the learning process. The result also strongly aligns with the study of Gomes et al. (2018) that ICT can contribute to effective learning through expanding access, promoting efficiency, improving the quality of learning, enhancing the quality of teaching and improving the management system.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that accounting education graduates agreed that ICT on entrepreneurship created an enabling business environment, boosted production of goods and services in enterprises, and influenced staff development. The findings of this research underscore the transformative impact of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) on the mindset, opportunities, and overall entrepreneurial endeavors of graduates in Anambra State.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Entrepreneurs should organize on-the-job training and offer opportunities for in-service training to their staff to make them more competent in the use of ICT.
2. Educational institutions in Anambra State should incorporate digital courses in all levels of education to develop ICT compliance workers at the points of employment.
3. Entrepreneurs in Anambra State should develop digital networks to promote digital economy and network of ideas.
4. The government should reduce the tax of internet sales to promote the purchase of internet resources by entrepreneurs.

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