INNOVATION CULTURE, KNOWLEDGE SHARING AND PREPAREDNESS OF BUSINESS EDUCATION STUDENTS FOR THE WORKPLACE

IBIDUNNI Ayodotun Stephen[1]*, IBIDUNNI Oyebisi Mary[2], OGUNNIAKE Olaleke Oluseye[3]
[1]Dr., Department of Business Management, Covenant University, Ota, Ogun State, Nigeria, ayodotun.ibidunni@covenantuniversity.edu.ng
[2]Department of Accounting, Bells University of Technology, Ota, Ogun State, Nigeria.ogundanaoyebs@yahoo.com
[3]olaleke.ogunnaike@covenantuniversity.edu.ng
*Corresponding Author

Abstract

Innovation culture in higher institutions has the capacity to impede or facilitate teaching innovation by business educators. Similarly, knowledge sharing among business students can strongly instigate passion and foster quality reasoning that can ensure the intellectual, psychological and emotional preparedness of the students for the world of work. Taking, these factors together, this research investigated the influence of higher institutions' innovative culture, and knowledge sharing practices among business students on their preparedness for the workplace. Using a sample size of 214 business education students drawn from 6 programmes, the hierarchical multiple regressions was used to show relationships based on the stated hypothesis. The statistical analysis showed that only sex of the students had a significant relationship with the variables. However, there was no direct relationship between innovation culture and preparedness of students for the workplace. More so, the interacting effect of knowledge sharing between innovation culture and preparedness for the workplace was not statistically established. Based on the findings, the study recommended that management and staff of higher institutions to keep abreast of best practices and engage more time into practical research that enhance industry and societal values. Moreover, students of higher institutions should be encouraged to engage actively in in-class and outside-the-class knowledge sharing activities that are necessary to add value to the future endeavours after school.

Keywords: Business education, Business student, Innovation, Innovation culture, Knowledge sharing

1 INTRODUCTION

Among the fundamental roles of higher institutions include creation of new knowledge and advancement of existing knowledge in innovative ways that contribute to organisations and overall societal welfare. In achieving this purpose, institutions recognise the need for encouraging knowledge sharing between faculty and students and the cross fertilisation of knowledge among students. However, the role of the University

management in facilitating knowledge sharing by ensuring an innovation culture in the University is also an indisputable fact (Hilary & Hammajam, 2015). The role of innovation culture in enhacing knowledge sharing include the establishment of a social environment that motivate free learning, willingness to share experiences between lecturers and students, and class room settings and teaching strategies that promote students' cross fertilisation of knowledge and learning experiences (Awodoyin, Osisanwo, Adetoro & Adeyemo, 2016). This role, according to Ohiorenoya and Eboreime (2014) is one that the Universities are still far from accomplishing. Owing to this challenge, Universities have been largely limited in producing graduates with the required knowledge and skill that are needed by business organisations to tackle challenges facing the revolving business environment (Hilary & Hammajam, 2015). James (2015) opine that students who are near graduation are likely to face the problem of employability because they are unskilful in the use of knowledge and basic literacy skills. Existing research on innovation and knowledge sharing in organisations, especially within Nigeria have been limited to conceptual clarifications (for example, Sarkindaji, Hashim & Abdullateef, 2014) and focused on industries apart from educational institutions (Ohiorenoya & Obadan, 2014; Salih & Selçuk, 2013). Moreover, research on innovation culture of organisations, especially educational organisations; as distinct from conventional innovation have received very little attention in existing literature. Therefore, this research is focused on examining the influence of innovation culture and knowledge sharing on the preparedness of business education students for the workplace.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Innovation Culture and Knowledge Sharing Practices in Higher Institutions

The need for continuous innovation in the global business environment cannot be over emphasized, especially because of the changing cultures that characterize societies as a result of globalization and the changing tastes of customers (Pohle & Chapman, 2006). Moreover, the role of higher education institutions in promoting these innovations can also not be overlooked because of their capability to mobilize the human agents that create and implement new knowledge for continuous innovations. Part of the implication of ensures continuous innovation involves that management of higher institutions promote innovation as a culture in their organisations. According to Setser and Morris (2015), innovation culture involves creating an environment that enhances the creation of new ideas and new ways of thinking about problems, perceiving them as opportunities for advancement and chatting new ways of solving them. Thus process; therefore, ensures that higher institutions equip themselves with innovation capabilities that can achieve their innovation goals (Alm & Jönsson, 2014).

Therefore, in order to promote innovative culture in higher institutions, Setser and Morris (2015), Alm and Jönsson (2014), Padilha and Gomes (2016) have suggested that certain factors must be in place, such as leadership support for innovation, structure for innovation, support mechanisms, such as remunerations and motivation, the higher institutions' openness to organisational learning and the promotion of behaviours that stimulate innovation. Swanger (2016) opined that higher institutions, having a robust number of educated human resources can promote new knowledge for organisational and societal wellbeing if these innovative factors are ensured. Therefore, this research hypothesises that:

H_{1a}: Innovation culture in higher institutions has a direct influence on students' preparedness for the workplace

H_{1b}: Innovation culture in higher institutions has a direct influence on students' knowledge sharing practices

H_2: The relationship between innovation culture and students' preparedness for the workplace can be enhanced by the mediating role of Knowledge Sharing among students

3. METHODOLOGY

Descriptive survey research design was adopted for this study. The population of the study comprises of 1,100 Business Education students studying Accounting, Banking and Finance, Business Administration, Economics, Human Resource Management and Marketing Courses. The respondents were drawn from two Nigerian private Universities, namely: Covenant University and The Bells University of Technology. Copies of structured questionnaire were administered to the respondents as part of data gathered measures for the research work. The face and content validity of the research instrument was ensured by experienced knowledge management researchers and lecturers. The reliability of the research instrument was carried out using the internal consistency approach; the overall Cronbach alpha value of 0.918 was arrived at, thus, confirming the reliability of the research items.

3.1 Measures

The research topic for this study consist of three major variables, namely: innovation culture, knowledge sharing and preparedness of Business Education students for the work place. The development of questionnaire items for these three variables were drawn from existing literature. Items on innovation culture were drawn from Alm and Jönsson (2014), Padilha and Gomes (2016). Items that measured knowledge sharing were drawn from Sohail and Daud (2009). Items that were used to measure the preparedness of Business Education students for the workplace were drawn from Junior Achievement (2013).

3.2 Reliability and Validity of the Scale Items

The reliability of the research items was ensured using the internal consistency method while the validity of scale items was carried out using construct validity. The reliability of scale items that are depicted in Table 1 below reveal that most of the items are above the threshold limit of 0.7. On the other hand, Tables 2 - 4 below shows the results from construct valibility. The Tables reflect the outcomes of convergent and discriminant validity based on the paths identified in the conceptual model of the research study. Based on the results in the table, the scale items satisfy conditions of convergent validity, because there are evidences on strong inter-item correlations among items of the same constructs, ranging from 0.436 – 0.696. On the other hand, discriminant validity among scale items of different constructs was evidenced by very low item-item correlations ranging from -0.40 – 0.586.

Table 1: Result of Reliability of Scale Items

S/No	Scale	No of Items	Cronbach Alpha
Innovation Culture			
1	Leadership	3	0.795
2	Structure and Process	4	0.759
3	Support Mechanism	3	0.780
4	Organisational Learning	4	0.825
5	Behaviour that Stimulate Innovation	4	0.743
Knowledge Sharing			
6	Nature of Knowledge	4	0.798
7	Working Culture	2	0.461
8	Motivation to Share	2	0.581
9	Opportunity to Share	2	0.745
Preparedness for the Workplace			
10	Communication	4	0.864
11	Conceptual Skill	3	0.540
12	Analytical and Problem-solving Skill	5	0.869
13	Teamwork Related Skill	3	0.844
14	Leadership Skill	4	0.858
15	Interpersonal and Network Skills	5	0.894
16	Critical-thinking Skill	3	0.883
17	Curriculum Related Skills	3	0.843

Table 2: Inter-Item Correlations of Innovation Culture and Knowledge Sharing Scale Items

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Leadership (1)	1								
StructureAndProcess (2)	.696**	1							
SupportMechanism (3)	.654**	.667**	1						
OrgLearning (4)	.621**	.674**	.649**	1					
BehaviourThatStimulateInnovation (5)	.563**	.548**	.501**	.682**	1				
NatureOfKnowledge (6)	.548**	.434**	.531**	.536**	.558**	1			
WorkingCulture (7)	.464**	.389**	.411**	.445**	.464**	.510**	1		
StudentAttitude (8)	.324**	.355**	.359**	.388**	.403**	.436**	.450**	1	
MotivationToShare (9)	.416**	.345**	.387**	.391**	.448**	.516**	.382**	.474**	1
OpportunitiesToShare (10)	.589**	.571**	.551**	.544**	.553**	.458**	.388**	.439**	.516**

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

Table 3: Inter-Item Correlations of Innovation Culture and Preparedness for the Workplace Scale Items

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Leadership (1)	1												
StructureAndProcess (2)	.696**	1											
SupportMechanism (3)	.654**	.667**	1										
OrgLearning (4)	.621**	.674**	.649**	1									
BehaviourThatStimulateInnovation (5)	.563**	.548**	.501**	.682**	1								
Communication (6)	.006	.031	-.034	-.027	.038	1							
ConceptualSkill (7)	-.080	-.081	-.095	-.052	-.035	.343**	1						
AnalyticalAndProblemSolving (8)	.034	.001	-.064	-.020	.041	.567**	.300**	1					
TeamRelatedSkill (9)	.055	.067	-.002	-.049	.030	.616**	.275**	.694**	1				
LeadershipSkill (10)	.087	.094	.045	-.016	-.050	.546**	.315**	.620**	.753**	1			
InterpersonalAndNetworkSkills (11)	.039	.020	-.012	-.114	-.132	.475**	.302**	.601**	.620**	.796**	1		
CriticalThinkingSkills (12)	.021	.021	-.073	-.052	-.048	.440**	.387**	.588**	.562**	.622**	.708**	1	
CurriculumRelatedSkills (13)	-.048	-.074	-.074	-.065	-.071	.536**	.406**	.587**	.609**	.677**	.683**	.780**	1

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

Table 4: Inter-Item Correlations of Knowledge Sharing and Preparedness for the Workplace Scale Items

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
NatureOfKnowledge (1)	1												
WorkingCulture (2)	.510**	1											
StudentAttitude (3)	.436**	.450**	1										
MotivationToShare (4)	.516**	.382**	.474**	1									
OpportunitiesToShare (5)	.458**	.388**	.439**	.516**	1								
Communication (6)	.039	.063	-.036	.014	.078	1							
ConceptualSkill (7)	.086	-.024	-.085	-.068	-.085	.343**	1						
AnalyticalAndProblemSolving (8)	.007	-.004	-.032	-.024	.076	.567**	.300**	1					
TeamRelatedSkill (9)	.011	.000	.070	.009	.124	.616**	.275**	.694**	1				
LeadershipSkill (10)	-.018	-.028	-.008	.006	.066	.546**	.315**	.620**	.753**	1			
InterpersonalAndNetworkSkills (11)	-.040	-.057	-.187**	-.040	-.007	.475**	.302**	.601**	.620**	.796**	1		
CriticalThinkingSkills (12)	-.013	-.041	-.065	-.054	.102	.440**	.387**	.588**	.562**	.622**	.708**	1	
CurriculumRelatedSkills (13)	.029	-.037	-.050	.054	.062	.536**	.406**	.587**	.609**	.677**	.683**	.780**	1

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

Table 5 shows that 89 (41.4%) of the respondents are male while 125 (58.1%) are female. Also, the highest population of respondents 106 (49.3%) are between the ages of 21-26 years, 103 respondents (47.9%) are of the age bracket 15-20 years, while only 5 respondents (2.4%) are between the ages 27-32 years. With respect to programme of study, 67 (31.2%) respondents are studying Economics, 63 (29.3%) respondents are studying Accounting, 36 respondents (16.7%) are studying Industrial Relations and HRM, 24 respondents (11.2%) are studying Marketing, 16 respondents (7.4%) are Business Administration students, while only 8 (3.7%) respondents are in the department of Banking and Finance.

Table 5: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Demographic Variable	Respondents Category	Frequency (%)
Sex	Male	89 (41.4)
	Female	125 (58.1)
	Total	**214 (99.5)**
Age	15 – 20 years	103 (47.9)
	21 – 26 years	106 (49.3)
	27 – 32 years	5 (2.4)
	Total	**214 (99.5)**
Programme of Study	Business Administration	16 (7.4)
	Marketing	24 (11.2)
	Economics	67 (31.2)
	Industrial Relations & HRM	36 (16.7)
	Accounting	63 (29.3)
	Banking & Finance	8 (3.7)
	Total	**214 (99.5)**

Source: Field Survey (2017)

Table 6: Hierarchical Regression of Innovation Culture, Knowledge Sharing and Preparedness of Students for the Workplace

	Preparedness for the Workplace			
	M1	**M2**	**M3**	
Demographic Variables				
Sex	0.301*	0.303*	0.307*	
Age	0.051	0.050	0.056	
Programme of Study	0.005	0.007	0.007	
Innovation Culture				
Leadership		0.043	0.016	
Structure and Process		0.062	0.045	
Support Mechanism		-0.088	-0.114	
Organisational Learning		-0.052	-0.072	
Behaviour the Stimulate Innovation		-0.027	-0.062	
Interacting Effect				
ICnKS			0.154	
R	0.192	0.222	0.226	
$\mathbf{R^2}$	0.037	0.049	0.051	
$\Delta\mathbf{R^2}$	-	0.012	0.002	
F	2.685*	1.332	1.225	
Df	3	8	9	

*$p < 0.05$

The statistical results shows the regression relationships between innovation culture, knowledge sharing and students' preparedness for the workplace. The results depicts that there are no significant effects between innovation culture in higher institutions and preparedness of students for the workplace. More so, with the introduction of knowledge sharing among students, as an interacting variable, the statistical outcomes remained unchanged as the moderating effect did not show any significant changes. Across the three models that were tested, only sex, as a demographic variable showed any significant effect on the preparedness of students for the workplace (model 1: $\beta = 0.301$; model 2: $\beta = 0.303$; model 3: $\beta = 0.307$; all significant at $p < 0.05$).

4. DISCUSSION

The focus of this research study was to investigate the interactions between innovation culture, knowledge sharing and preparedness of students for the workplace. The statistical regressions carried out to demonstrate direct and indirect relationships among the variables largely showed that there were no significant relationships among the various paths. Only sex of the students was shown to be significant across the three models tested. This implies that being of either the male or female gender largely influences

how determined students are to engage themselves in the work environment, especially in Nigeria. Although, the direct and indirect relationships tested were not significant, it might mean that higher institutions still have a significantly large amount of work to do in evaluating their present curriculum, teaching and learning models, and knowledge transfer/sharing strategies to suit the real life experiences that are obtainable in the Nigeria business environment. This is a finding that is consistent with the conclusions drawn from existing studies about the backwardness of Nigerian higher institutions in exploiting knowledge and continuously innovating dynamic operational processes (Radwan & Pellegrini, 2010). More so, it might also imply that higher institutions need to foster tacit and explicit knowledge sharing both within and outside class room settings among students, especially when such knowledge sharing brings together the students with high and low intelligence levels. Thus, serving as a means of enhancing basic conceptual understanding, story-telling and sharing experiences learned from industrial attachments and personal study.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The study investigated the relationships between innovation culture, knowledge sharing and preparedness of students for the workplace. Students from two well pronounced private schools in Nigeria formed the respondents' base for the study. Although, the regression results did not show any significant relationships between the different paths that were tested, insightful insights were draw to enhance the practices of innovation and knowledge sharing in higher institutions. It is necessary that higher institutions move on from thinking of innovation as a one-time activity, to making it a culture that can be sustained over time as part of their institutional activity. This is important because it will help the management and staff of higher institutions to keep abreast of best practices and engage more time into practical research that enhance industry and societal values. Moreover, students of higher institutions should be encouraged to engage actively in in-class and outside-the-class knowledge sharing activities that are necessary to add value to the future endeavours after school. It could be a part of the school's curriculum.

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