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IDEA INCUBATION AND BUSINESS GROWTH; A STUDY OF BUSINESS INCUBATION CENTRES IN SOUTH EAST NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This work, titled Idea incubation and business growth, was carried out to determine the relationship between the dependent variable to the independent variable decomposed to idea support system and business advancement. The study adopted a descriptive design. Four Federal Government owned incubation centres in the South East Nigeria provided the population of the study, particularly the management staff/trainers numbering 112. Total enumeration was adopted as sample size. The instrument for data collection was a 5 points Likert scaled and structured which was subjected to both face and content validity, while pilot test which analyzed with spearman Brown Correlation coefficient result yielded 0.811 for reliability. The hypothesis was tested with Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient at 95% confidence. The result is that there is a significant positive relationship between idea support system and business advancement. This study concluded that innumerable ideas need not be wasted, but can be collected, sorted, banked incubated as need arises and harnessed for societal good. This study recommended that governments everywhere and institutions should work together to establish idea incubation support systems to aid Small and Medium Enterprises to incubate and harness their business ideas for collective good, as business advancements will help enhance standard of living, reduces social vices, to meet societal need economically while absorbing millions of unemployed in the global community.

***Key words:** Business advancement, Business growth, Idea incubation, Idea support system,*

1. INTRODUCTION

Almost everything begins with an idea is an intangible mental picture, impression or opinion suggestive of a solution. Idea incubation is the process of numbering an idea from ideation to reality. Every product, worthwhile endeavor came into being at a point in time from an idea. Most unincubated ideas die a natural death, while great projects, exploits and achievements begin their journey as ideas that flashed through the mind, ignored, forgotten, reflashed, regurgitated, deliberately processed or nurtured to reality. Incubation of an idea refers to the process of deliberately ruminating over an idea. Thinking deeply again and again over an idea for a reasonably extended period

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creaturely for solving a problem, modifying a solution, improving adapting or adjusting to meet a target, beat competition and so on.

Business growth refers to a startup first surviving, then breaking even, marking profit, expanding, developing capacity to compete in its industry, acquisition of competitive advantage, increasing its market share and so. Business is a human economic activity that is concerned with exchange of values for profit in a socially acceptable manner. Business entities generally operate as going concerns, that all things being equal continues ad-infinitum as living organism, developing and changing in multiple dimensions as if adapts to its environment. These entities sometimes instead of growth experience decline, stagnation, bankruptcy or fortune. Become business is driven by self-interest of the promoters, the normal expectations of investment is growth. Business firms operate in a very volatile environments. As these firms are perpetually under pressure to innovate, customers want to pay less for more, competitive pressures from alternative products, technologies and new ideas make obsolete old ideas and products. Every form wants to grow and no individual or group of individuals have monopoly of ideas. Rue and Byers (2000) intoned that ideas finding is very crucial for organizational sustainability. Why do some excel in benefiting from ideas that are common to all? Obviously answers to the question is approachable from diverse perspectives. But primarily, ideas are like opportunities. These come and go. It depends how one handles such. Sometimes, these ideas may be overlooked, ignored, dismissed, nurtured and or taken advantage of. Ideas, like eggs, need conducive environment like warmth and time for the emergence of the young. If ideas are considered fundamental to growth and are not the preserve of any individual or firm, why do some firms take advantage of it to build and grow better them others? Is the truism of Onwuzuligbo (2018) which states that, "what is not managed is damaged" applicable here? Implying that ideas, if managed, good many come out of it. But if not managed or mismanaged, it is damaged and so becomes useless and unproductive?

1.1 Objective

The objective of this study is to determine the relationship between idea support system and business advancement.

1.2 Research Question

What is the relationship between idea support system and business achievement?

1.3 Research Hypothesis

H_0: There is no significant relationship between ideas support system and business advancement.

2. LITERATYRE REVIEW

2.1 Conceptual Review

2.1.1 Idea Incubation

Idea is the mental perception or image of an object, a notion, thought, or impression. Rue and Byars (2000) compared ideas to a spark in a sudden flash, in the mind. Sudden because it was unintended or unplanned. But allowing it to catch fire is the incubation which is a conscious effort, process of nourishing the spark to flames of fire. Jimngang (2004) conceptualized idea incubation as the process of furthering a vague idea to birth a viable project or product. This scholarly opinion agrees with those of Rue and Byars (2000) who also observed the existence of conscious effort,

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time gap and process gap between ideation and viable product. It is therefore a process of transforming idea to tangible products by employing ideas support systems. Whereas an incubator describes an infrastructure that may include a complex or organization with buildings, experienced management as technical staff, enabling environment, funding, and so on functioning as incubation support of systems. Incubation phenomenon describes the processes of incubation support systems brood - hatching ideas for society satisfying products, services as projects to emerge. Zimmerer and Scarborough (2005) described ideas that have been successfully incubated into innovated products or services as goldmine that should be protected with a patented copyright.

2.1.2 Support Systems

Support system is very broad concept that comprises individuals, agencies, institutions, elements and facilities which positively brood hatch ideas from conceptualization to birth and maturity of physical product service or project (Onwuzuligbo & Nwota, 2019). Support systems include several sub systems which necessarily include management marketing, production, funding, social support and information support sub systems. These support subsystems provide conducive enabling environment brood hatching, birth and maturity of business ideas. Written and Cameroon (2007) noted that ideas support systems are critical for successful innovations and fosters creativity in entrepreneurial organizations.

2.1.3 Business Growth

Business, according to Onwuzuligbo and Osisioma (2018), is a human economic activity concerned with exchange of values for a profit in a socially accepted manner. For these scholars, the bottom line of business is profit which provides the liquidity for offsetting costs and achieving growth. To Nickels, Mchugh and Mchugh (2002), business is viewed as any activity that seeks profit by providing goods and services to others. And profitability anchored on customer satisfaction is critical for a firm's survival and growth. A business is either growing or declining. Indeed, business growth is derived from organizational effectiveness (Robbing, 2000). This agrees with the notion of Nickel *et al.* (2002) who insisted that value is credited when organizational resources are utilized in the right way, at the right time and at a minimum cost to achieve high quality goods and services for consumers. Business entities use various criteria to measure the effectiveness of their goal attainment. Such measures of business growth include customer satisfaction, employee retention, career development, job satisfaction; productivity measured in terms of quality and quantity of outpour,: financial terms such as earnings per share, return on equity, liquidity and so on (Nickel et al., 2002). Thus, business growth often leads to exposition, advancement, integration, mergers, diversification (Nickel *et al.*, 2002; Onwuzuligbo, 2018).

Business Advancement

The concept of business advancement connote operational activities of the focal enterprise moving forward or going ahead inspite of frustrating dictates of prevailing circumstances. It is related to business development which is a set of tasks and processes meant to increase value, identify or hire and acquire new clients. Barker (2022) noted that business development is the process of carrying out organizational activities to harness business opportunities utilizing existing resources and a little more to boost revenue and grow the firm. Improvement in operational performance

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leading to improved output in terms of quantity and quality is of withstanding constraints on factor inputs is business advancement (Robbins, 2000; Schermerhorn & Nickel, 2002). Business advancement is making progress towards the next level of growth output of enterprise, other market share, and consolidating or extending market niche (Timmons & Spinelli, 2004).

2.2 Theoretical Framework

2.2.1 Bounded Ideation Theory (BIT)

This work was anchored on Bounded Ideation Theory (BIT) of Briggs and Reinig (2010). BIT states that ideation function is the relationship between good ideas and the number of ideas generated or contributed. It states that finding good ideas during idea generation is limited by several factors such as understanding, attention, resources, good congruence, mental and physical stamina and solution space.

3. METHODOLOGY

Survey research design was adopted in this study to determine the relationship between idea support system and business advancement. The study was carried out at the four technology Incubation Centers in the South East Nigeria, namely Aba in Abia State, Nnewi in Anambra state, Owerri in Imo state and Enugu in Enugu State. These Incubation Centers are owned by the Federal government of Nigeria and duly operated by its owners under the supervision of the Federal Ministry of Science and Technology, The entire top management Cadre/ Trainers of the incubation Canters constitute the population and sample of the study.

Table 1: Incubation Centres in the South East Nigeria

S/N	Name and Location of Incubation Centres	No. of Staff/Trainers
1	Technology Incubation Centre, Industrial Road, Aba	33
2	Technology Incubation Centre, Onitsha/Okigwe Road, Nnewi	30
3	Technology Incubation Centre, (Monitoring of works) Okigwe Road, Owerri	25
4	Technology Incubation Centre, (IMT Industrial Dev. Center) Enugu	24
	Total	112

Source: Field work, 2021.

The data were collected using 5-point Likert-scale type structured instrument. Spearman- Brown correlation coefficient of 0.81 was used to confirm the reliability of the instrument which was subjected to face and content validity. The data collected were subjected to Pearson Product Moment correlation coefficient for testing the hypothesis at 95% confidence interval.

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4. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Table 2: Data Distribution and Collection

S/N	Technology Incubation Centres	No. Distributed	No. Returned	No. Analyzed
1	Aba	33	31	31
2	Nnewi	30	30	29
3	Owerri	25	23	23
4	Enugu	24	24	23
	Total (percentage) %	112 (100%)	108 (96%)	106 (95%)

Source: Field work 2021

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics.

S/N	**Idea Support System (ISS) CA**	**Mean**	**Std. Derivation**	**Decision**
1	There are available idea support systems	3.9087	1.2960	Accept
2	Funds for financing/supporting new idea development are available	3.6484	1.2814	Accept
3	There are available trained human resources for new idea development	3.7763	1.2304	Accept
4	We have linkages with research institutions for new idea support	3.6849	1.433	Accept
Business Advancement (BA) Case in starting New Business Line				
S/N		**Mean**	**Std. Derivation**	**Decision**
1	We have experienced difficulties in starting new business line	3.0776	1.3908	Accept
2	Our new products support systems effectively eases advancement	3.6347	1.416	Accept
3	Our network of resource mobilization is sufficiently in place to achieve business advancement	4.1142	0.9534	Accept
4	We have had notable failures with startup of new business	2.9772	1.5781	Reject

Source: Fuel survey 2021. Corporation with SPSS ver 23.

The table above shows the descriptive statistics of the research question. The mean value used for analysis of the acceptance region is 3 and above, while the rejection region as below 3. The average mean of the idea support system and business advancement are 3.75

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and 3.45, while the average standard deviation are 1.31 and 1.33 showing there is a relationship between idea support system and business advancement.

4.2 Test of Hypothesis

H_o: There is no significant positive relationship between idea support system and business advancement.

Table 4: Correlation

		Idea Support System (ISS)	Business Advancement (BA)
ISS	Pearson Correlation	1	.872
	Sig. (2 tailed)		000
	N	106	106
BA	Pearson Correlation	.872	1
	Sig. (2 tailed)	000	
	N	106	106

Correlation is significant 0.005 (2 tailed)

The above table shows the correlation coefficient for idea support system and business advancement, the results generated indicate that there is positive relationship between the variables under study.

N	Cal. R	DF	Crit. R	Remark
106	0.8720	104	.148	Significant

Source: Field work 2021

Decision: The critical value at 0.05 level of significance, 217 degree of freedom is 0148, and the calculated 0.872. The calculated at 0.872 is greater than the critical r 0.148/Cal I 872> Crit R .148). The research hypothesis is therefore acceptable.

Test for significance

$$Z\ Cal = \frac{\sqrt{N} - 2}{\sqrt{1} - R^2} = \frac{\sqrt{106} - 2}{\sqrt{1} - .872^2} = \frac{\sqrt{104}}{\sqrt{1} - .760} = \frac{10.198}{0.489} = 20.85$$

The observed test of significance level 20.85 which is higher than the critical value of .148 at 10 degree freedom proves that there is positive significant relationship between the two variables under study.

The result of this work provides evidence that idea incubation and business growth positively related. The hypothesis tested show from the correlation result that there is a positive significant relationship between idea support system and business advancement. This agrees with the work of Hanadi and Michael (2011).

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5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Business ideas are not to be toyed with, ignored or wasted. These are seed which when incubated adequately have the potential of yielding tremendous benefits to both individuals, business entities and the larger society. This study therefore recommends that governments, Institutions and firms should store/bank their business ideas. This is more as company taxes can be partly used to subsidize the services rendered by the Incubation Centres to Micro, Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (MSMEs) across the country.

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