

EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS EXPECTED OF BUSINESS EDUCATION GRADUATES IN COLLEGES OF EDUCATION DELTA STATE FOR SUSTAINABLE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

This study examined the employability skills expected of business education graduates in Colleges of Education Delta State for sustainable workforce development. Three research questions and three null hypotheses guided the study. The study employed a descriptive survey research design. The population of this study was made up of 107 Vocational and Technical Educators in three Colleges of Education in Delta State. The entire population was studied. An instrument titled: “Employability Skills Expected of Business Education Graduates Questionnaire (ESEBEGQ)” was designed and used to elicit information from the respondents. The instrument was validated by two experts from the Measurement and Evaluation Department. The reliability coefficient of the instrument was established using Cronbach Alpha which yielded coefficient values of 0.85 which is high for internal consistency. The data collected for this study were analyzed using the mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions while t-test was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The result revealed that to a very high extent, technical skills, human relations skills and business analytical skills are expected of business education graduates in Colleges of Education in Delta State for sustainable workforce development. Based on the findings, the study recommended that business education graduates should be able to use critical thinking and problem-solving skills in order to find solutions or complete an exercise.

Keywords: Business Education, Employability skills, Sustainable workforce development.

Introduction

Over the years, business education has progressed from one level to another. This is evident in the different definitions offered by various authors and researchers in trying to make clear the meaning of business education. Ohiwere (2021), defined business education as a course that prepares students for entry in advancement of jobs within business; and prepares them to handle their own business affairs to function intelligently as consumers and citizens in a business economy. Similarly, Amaewhule (2018), opined that business education encompasses knowledge, attitudes, and employability skills needed by all citizens in order to effectively manage their personal businesses and economic system. Atakpa (2021), remarked that business education is an embodiment of vocational and technical knowledge as well as skills needed for employment and advancement in a broad range of business careers. In other words, Business education is an aspect of vocational and technical education which is used as a term to refer to those educational processes involving the study of techniques, acquisition of practical skills, attitudes and knowledge relating to occupation in vocational sectors of economic and social life. Etonyeaku (2018), affirmed that business education has a formidable force that will equip its graduates with appropriate employability skills, knowledge, abilities and competencies that will enable them to be self-employed and self-reliant.

However, the extent to which Colleges of Education offering business education is capable of producing potential graduates with high quality employability skills has been attracting the attention of scholars and policy-makers globally. This interest stems from two major concerns. First, there are signs that patterns of work are rapidly changing with new sectors, and with technology, globalization and demographic changes significantly reforming the workforce

(Oliver, 2022; Pitan 2021). The implication of this change is that it is no longer enough for business education graduates to have a good certificate but they should also possess skills and attributes required to compete and collaborate in a dynamic knowledge economy and world of work (Rufai, Bakar & Rashid, 2023). The second concern is that the existing curriculum in Colleges of Education in Nigeria is not producing graduates with the kind of professional and lifelong learning skills that they need to be successful in the competitive and congested changing world of work. Due to certain impediments (such as inadequate funding, poor electricity supply, inadequate facilities and poor management etc), the type of skills acquired by most business education graduates in Colleges of Education, compared with the demands of the labour market and technological advancement are nothing to boast about.

Institutions of higher learning including Colleges of Education have been heavily criticized for the fact that their mode of training has little or no relevance to the social and economic needs of their country, which has consequently lead to the production of unemployable graduates (Rufai, Bakar & Rashid, 2023). Unfortunately, the unemployed Nigerian graduates are frustrated because they cannot secure employment that seems to match their level of education. In Nigeria for instance, indications from past studies have shown that the high rate of unemployment experienced by graduates is not only as a result of unavailability of jobs, but also due to a lack of candidates with employability skills that business owners are looking out for (Emeh, Nwanguma & Abaroh, 2016; Pitan, 2021). This is because in today's world, merely having a degree is not a guarantee for employment, nor is it a reliable indicator of the individual's competence in a given job. As a result, business education graduates should have current and relevant knowledge, practical experience, soft skills and a positive attitude to allow them to be competitive in the job market. They should possess the necessary knowledge and skills before they go out into the world of work (Tam, 2021).

In view of the foregoing, Agbam (2021), stated that the key skills required of business education graduates are skills of communication and human relations, application of number; problem solving, team working, information and communication technology as well as improving one's own learning and performance abilities. While the general skills include the key skills but also covers more complex reasoning and management skills and personal values such as motivation, discipline, judgment, leadership and initiative. However, it is evident that many business education graduates lack these skills. This explains why most employers of labour in this nation consider business education graduates as half-baked and unusable without further training (Oliver, 2022). Business Education is a discipline that emphasizes on work skills acquisition by its recipients and as a result should be able to produce graduates who possess employability skills and are well trained to work in a rapidly growing business atmosphere.

Skill is the ability to do something. It is also referred to as a type of ability or a particular ability to do something. The Dictionary of Management by Daniel (2020), defined skill as learned responses, often as a result of specific training which afford someone the ability to perform a particular task and achieve a particular objective. Also, Bleak in Uzor and Ike (2016), described skill as the ability to do something well, gained through training and experience. Furthermore, skill is one's personal competencies in the performance of specific tasks acquired after a period of training or experience. In a similar vein, Pitan (2021), defined skills as those abilities of power and authority of knowledge, attitudes and facts necessary for accomplishing tasks. Skill is therefore the knowledge, abilities and attitudes that are necessary for accomplishing a given task. The dissatisfaction with the skills demonstrated by business education graduates is however a thing of great concern to small scale business owners. It is therefore against this background that this study examined employability skills expected of business education graduates in Colleges of Education Delta State for sustainable workforce development.

Statement of the Problem

The work place is such a dynamic environment that is changing with time and as such, the skills required of employees are also not left out of these changes. Several studies have shown that most business education graduates are yet to adjust to some of these dynamic changes in the world of work (Emeh, Nwanguma & Abaroh, 2019; Akansi, 2017). Business education graduates seem to lack necessary skills which are required of them such as human relations skills, analytical skills, mathematical skills, time management skills as well as technical skills among others (Adeniran, 2019). Furthermore, the business education curriculum content of most tertiary institutions including Colleges of Education have not helped in this regard as it takes some period of time for the review of the curriculum. On the other hand and most importantly, the white collar or paid jobs that were hitherto available and accessible immediately after school have practically disappeared and the society is gradually moving to the stage where the average graduate is either forced or is willing and ready to go into small scale business. As a result, it became necessary to examine employability skills expected of business education graduates in Colleges of Education Delta State for sustainable workforce development.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine employability skills expected of business education graduates in Colleges of Education Delta State for sustainable workforce development. Specifically, the study sought to;

1. determine the extent to which technical skills are expected of business education graduates in Colleges of Education Delta State for sustainable workforce development.
2. Examine the extent to which human relation skills are expected of business education graduates in Colleges of Education Delta State for sustainable workforce development.
3. find out the extent to which business analytical skills are expected of business education graduates in Colleges of Education Delta State for sustainable workforce development.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study.

1. To what are technical skills expected of business education graduates in Colleges of Education Delta State for sustainable workforce development?
2. To what extent are human relation skills expected of business education graduates in Colleges of Education Delta State for sustainable workforce development?
3. To what extent are business analytical skills expected of business education graduates in Colleges of Education Delta State for sustainable workforce development?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance.

Ho₁: There is no significant difference in the mean rating of male and female respondents on the extent to which technical skills are expected of business education graduates in Colleges of Education Delta State.

Ho₂: There is no significant difference in the mean rating of male and female respondents on the extent to which human relation skills are expected of business education graduates in Colleges of Education Delta State.

Ho₃: There is no significant difference in the mean rating of male and female respondents on the extent to which analytical skills are expected of business education graduates in Colleges of Education Delta State.

Methods

The descriptive survey research design was adopted for this study. The population of this study was made up of 107 Vocational and Technical Educators in three Colleges of Education in Delta State. The Colleges include Federal College of Education (Technical), Asaba, College of Education, Warri and College of Education, Musogar. The entire population was studied, hence there was no sampling. The instrument for data collection in this study was a structured questionnaire known as “Employability Skills Expected of Business Education Graduates Questionnaire (ESEBEGQ). The questionnaire was based on a four-point rating scale of Very High Extent (VHE) - 4; High Extent (HE) - 3; Low Extent (LE) - 2; Very Low Extent (VLE) – 1. The reliability coefficient of the instrument was established using Cronbach Alpha which yielded coefficient values of 0.85 which is high for internal consistency. The entire 107 questionnaires were administered and retrieved. The data collected for this study were analyzed using mean to answer the research questions while t-test was used to test the null hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance. Using the mean, a bench mark of 2.5 was used as a limiting score for acceptance while any score below 2.5 indicated rejection. The null hypothesis was accepted if the t-calculated value is less than the t.critical value. Where the reverse is the case, the null hypothesis was rejected.

Presentation of Results

Research Question 1: To what are technical skills expected of business education graduates in Colleges of Education Delta State for sustainable workforce development?

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation Scores of Responses on the Extent to which Technical Skills are Expected of Business Education Graduates in Colleges of Education Delta State for Sustainable Workforce Development.

S/N	STATEMENT	VHE	HE	LE	VLE	$\bar{x}$	SD	RE MA RK
1.	Ability to receive payments by issuing receipts of transactions of the business.	90	13	4	0	3.80	0.48	VHE
2.	Ability to carry out banking transactions of the business.	27	77	3	0	3.22	0.48	HE
3.	Ability to maintain office cash register of the business.	88	11	3	5	3.70	0.74	VHE
4.	Ability to pay/settle office bills like Telecom bills, PHCN bills etc.	67	23	9	8	3.39	0.92	HE
5	Ability to prepare vouchers for payments of any transactions.	91	7	2	7	3.70	0.80	VHE
Grand Mean						3.56	0.68	VHE

Source: Researcher's field survey, 2024.

Analyses on Table 1 reveals that the mean scores range from 3.22 – 3.80. This shows that the respondents rated very high extent to the statements in items 1-5. Data in Table 1 further shows that the Grand Mean for the entire item is 3.56, and falls within the response option of Very high extent. The Grand Mean score of 3.56 is evidence that the respondents rated very high extent on the items. This reveals that to a very high extent, technical skills are expected of business education graduates in Colleges of Education Delta State for sustainable workforce development. The standard deviation score of 0.68 indicates that the respondents were homogenous in their response.

Research Question 2: To what extent are human relation skills expected of business education graduates in Colleges of Education Delta State for sustainable workforce development?

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation Scores of Responses on the Extent to which Human Relations Skills are Expected of Business Education Graduates in Colleges of Education Delta State for Sustainable Workforce Development.

S/N	STATEMENT	VHE	HE	LE	VLE	$\bar{x}$	SD	REMARK
6.	Ability to accept responsibility for mistake.	67	18	16	6	3.36	0.93	HE
7.	Good public relation with the boss.	83	19	5	0	3.73	0.54	VHE
8.	Ability to provide feedback immediately to the people concerned.	56	35	8	8	3.30	0.90	HE
9.	Ability to get along with other workers in the business.	96	11	0	0	3.90	0.30	VHE
10.	Ability to co-ordinate the various job/duties assigned to other office worker in the business.	75	23	8	1	3.61	0.67	VHE
Grand Mean						3.58	0.67	VHE

Source: Researcher's field survey, 2024.

Analyses on Table 2 reveals that the mean scores range from 3.30 – 3.90. This shows that the respondents rated very high extent to the statements in items 1-5. Data in Table 2 further shows that the Grand Mean for the entire item is 3.58, and falls within the response option of Very high extent. The Grand Mean score of 3.58 is evidence that the respondents rated very high extent on the items. This reveals that to a very high extent, human relations skills are expected of business education graduates in Colleges of Education Delta State for sustainable workforce development. The standard deviation score of 0.67 indicates that the respondents were homogenous in their response.

Research Question 3: To what extent are business analytical skills expected of business education graduates in Colleges of Education Delta State for sustainable workforce development?

Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviation Scores of Responses on the Extent to which Analytical Skills are Expected of Business Education Graduates in Colleges of Education Delta State for Sustainable Workforce Development.

S/N	STATEMENT	VHE	HE	LE	VLE	$\bar{x}$	SD	RE MA RK
11.	Ability of business education graduates to spot out trends in the data that others may not find and create wealth from it.	68	24	11	4	3.46	0.82	HE
12.	Ability of business education graduates to investigate a problem and find a solution in a timely and efficient manner.	97	9	1	0	3.90	0.33	VH E
13.	Ability to think critically so as to formulate plans on financial information in other to solve problems.	45	55	6	1	3.35	0.63	HE
14.	Ability to evaluate information and make decisions based on findings/evidence.	59	34	12	2	3.40	0.76	HE
15.	Ability to analyze various products/services of the business.	103	3	1	0	3.95	0.25	VH E
Grand Mean						3.61	0.56	VH E

Source: Researcher's field survey, 2024

Analyses on Table 3 reveals that the mean scores range from 3.35 – 3.95. This shows that the respondents rated very high extent to the statements in items 1-5. Data in Table 3 further shows that the Grand Mean for the entire item is 3.61, and falls within the response option of Very high extent. The Grand Mean score of 3.61 is evidence that the respondents rated very high extent on the items. This reveals that to a very high extent, analytical skills are expected of business education graduates in Colleges of Education Delta State for sustainable workforce development. The standard deviation score of 0.61 indicates that the respondents were homogenous in their response.

Hypotheses

Ho₁: There is no significant difference in the mean rating of male and female respondents on the extent to which technical skills are expected of business education graduates in Colleges of Education Delta State.

Table 4: Analysis of t-test on the Mean and Standard Deviation Responses of Male and Female Respondents on the Extent to Which Technical Skills are Expected of Business Education Graduates in Colleges of Education Delta State.

Respondents	n	$\bar{x}$	S ²	Df	t.cal	t.crit	α	Remark
Male	21	3.71	0.47	105	0.567	1.982	.05	Retain Ho
Female	86	3.65	0.38					

From the t-test table, since t-cal (0.567) < t-crit (1.982), retain Ho. The null hypothesis is hereby retained that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female respondents on the extent to which technical skills are expected of business education graduates in Colleges of Education Delta State.

Ho₂: There is no significant difference in the mean rating of male and female respondents on the extent to which human relation skills are expected of business education graduates in Colleges of Education Delta State.

Table 5: Analysis of t-test on the Mean and Standard Deviation Responses of Male and Female Respondents on the Extent to Which Human Relation Skills are Expected of Business Education Graduates in Colleges of Education Delta State.

Respondents	n	$\bar{x}$	S^2	Df	t.cal	t.crit	α	Remark
Male	21	3.55	0.62	105	0.534	1.946	.05	Retain Ho
Female	86	3.71	0.42					

From the t-test table, since t-cal (0.534) < t-crit (1.946), retain Ho. The null hypothesis is hereby retained that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female respondents on the extent to which human relation skills are expected of business education graduates in Colleges of Education Delta State.

Ho₃: There is no significant difference in the mean rating of male and female respondents on the extent to which analytical skills are expected of business education graduates in Colleges of Education Delta State.

Table 6: Analysis of t-test on the Mean and Standard Deviation Responses of Male and Female Respondents on the Extent to Which Analytical Skills are Expected of Business Education Graduates in Colleges of Education Delta State.

Respondents	n	$\bar{x}$	S^2	Df	t.cal	t.crit	α	Remark
Male	21	3.76	0.53	105	0.512	1.879	.05	Retain Ho
Female	86	3.65	0.68					

From the t-test table, since t-cal (0.512) < t-crit (1.879), retain Ho. The null hypothesis is hereby retained that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female respondents on the extent to which analytical skills are expected of business education graduates in Colleges of Education Delta State.

Summary of Findings

The following emerged from the present study. To a very high extent;

1. Technical skills are expected of business education graduates in Colleges of Education Delta State for sustainable workforce development.
2. Human relations skills are expected of business education graduates in Colleges of Education Delta State for sustainable workforce development.
3. Business analytical skills are expected of business education graduates in Colleges of Education Delta State for sustainable workforce development.

Discussion of Findings

The discussion of results obtained from the presentation and analysis of data of the study are hereby presented below:

The first finding of the study revealed that technical skills are expected of business education graduates in Colleges of Education Delta State for sustainable workforce development. Business education graduates are expected among other things to acquire the ability to receive payments

by issuing receipts of transactions of the business; be able to carry out banking transactions of the business; possess the ability to maintain office cash register of the business; pay/settle office bills like Telecom bills, PHCN bills e.t.c as well as the ability to prepare vouchers for payments of any transactions. This finding agrees with Agbamu (2021), that technical skills are needed by the graduates as it enables them to actively work with others for the benefit of the organization. The skills include numeracy and information technology proficiency, decision modeling and risk analysis, measurement, reporting, and also compliance with legislative and regulatory requirements.

The second finding of this study revealed that human relations skills are expected of business education graduates in Colleges of Education Delta State for sustainable workforce development. On the human relations skills that business education graduates should acquire include the ability to accept responsibility for their mistakes; have good public relation with the boss of the business; ability to provide feedback immediately to the people concerned; ability to get along with other workers in the business; ability to co-ordinate the various job/duties assigned to other office workers in the business. This finding is aligns with Agbamu (2021) that the graduates should possess the ability to communicate orally as in written form. More so, Adeniran (2019), stated that the graduate must be smartly dressed as their personal appearance makes a favorable impression upon the employer, associates, clients and office workers. The employee should maintain good health, feed well, and look good with carriage of self – esteem and good comportment.

The third and final finding of the study revealed that business analytical skills are expected of business education graduates in Colleges of Education Delta State for sustainable workforce development. business analytical skills expected of business education graduates include the ability of to spot out trends in the data that others may not find and create wealth from it; ability to investigate a problem and find a solution in a timely and efficient manner; ability to think critically so as to formulate plans on financial information in other to solve problems; ability to evaluate information and make decisions based on findings/evidence as well as ability to analyze various products/services of the business. This finding corresponds with Tam (2021) who submitted that employers look for employees with the ability to investigate a problem and find a solution in a timely, efficient manner. The study concludes that to solve problems, employees need strong analytical skills.

Conclusion

The study examined employability skills expected of business education graduates in Colleges of Education Delta State for sustainable work force development.. From the findings of the study, it could be concluded that business education graduates are expected to possess skills in the areas of technical, human relations and analytical. Skill being the ability to do something well, gained through training and experience. These skills are the knowledge, competencies and attitudes that are necessary for accomplishing a given task by business education graduates.

Recommendations

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

1. Ministry of Education should ensure that Colleges of Education become more practical-oriented. If this is done, it will enable students to be theoretically and practically well equipped for today's labour market.
2. Business education graduates should acquire human relation skills because work place environment is a collection of different kinds of people who interact on daily basis.

3. Employers are constantly looking for employees with analytical skills and as a result, business education graduates should be able to use critical thinking and problem-solving skills in order to find solutions or complete an exercise.

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