

Strategies for Developing Employability Skills in Secondary School Leavers through Business Studies in IKA-South Local Government Area of Delta State.

Prof Pac Ordu and Agwazie Bridget

Department of Business Education, Federal University Otuoke, Bayelsa State

Email: pacordu2019@gmail.com

Department of Business Education, University of Delta, Agbor

Email: agwaziebridget484@gmail.com

Abstract: *This study sought to assess the strategies for developing employability skills in secondary school leavers through Business Studies in Ika South Local Government Area of Delta State. The study adopted the descriptive survey research. Four research questions and two hypotheses were raised for the study. The population of the study consisted of 100 employers and 100 employees. The study sample consists of 10 employers and 10 employees in secondary schools in Ika South Local Government Area of Delta State. The instrument was face-validated by three experts, two from educational administration and one from measurement and evaluation in the faculty of education, University of Delta, Agbor. The instrument was tested for reliability using the cronbach alpha and coefficient of 0.83 was obtained. The data for this study was obtained through the administration of a survey questionnaire. The mean, standard deviation and the student t-test was the main statistical tool used to analyze the research questions. The findings of the study revealed that implementations of the business study programmes should utilize effective methods that will positively impact the development of employability skills in secondary schools. The researcher made five recommendations among which is that, government and secondary school authorities should at regular interval organize workshops, seminars and conferences in order to impact its necessary skills for developing employability skills in other to develop secondary school leavers through business studies.*

Keywords: Strategies, Employability Skills, Secondary School Leavers, Business Studies

INTRODUCTION

Business Studies according to Ehimetolor, Osu Nwifo, Makeri-Yahaya & Oludunjoye (2016) is the study of the component parts of business environment such as office practice, book keeping, keyboarding, commerce and computer education. Business studies in the context of this study is a subject at the junior secondary school to enable them acquire basic skills in office practice, commerce, book-keeping and accounting, keyboard and computer education. When these components are studied together, they give the student a better understanding of the importance of business activities, that is how the office functions; how to keep account and enter transactions into different books, how to keep documents, how to own and run a small business enterprise and how to manipulate the keyboard of a computer for the enhancement of business.

Employability is not the same as gaining a graduate job, rather it implies something much more than that and includes graduate capacity to function in a job and be able to move between jobs, thus remaining employable throughout their life.

Professor Mantz Yorke (2014) defines employability as a set of achievement—skills and understandings and personal attribute that make graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations, which benefits themselves, the workforce, the community and the economy. Knight and Yorke (2014) outlined employability into four broad and interrelated components (a) understanding (b) skillful practices including development of skills (c) efficacy beliefs (including students' views of themselves) (d) meta-cognition (including self-awareness and a capacity to reflect on learning).

Employability has to do with capacity and creativity is an attribute of an expert in any successful employment. It has to do with the capacity of persons to produce compositions product or ideas of any sort, which are essentially new or previously unknown to the producer. It is a basic tool for progress in any undertaking by any family, community or society. Oziomo (2016), stated that the condition of modern-day living, characterized by complexities of hardships and interdependencies call for increased levels of creativity. Nwazwobe (1989) noted that millions of people live in miserable conditions in life and it is the creative ones that can attend to or proffer solutions to problems which seemed intractable. It is also a process by which something new; either an idea or an object is produced.

Promoting employability through creativity makes room for self-employment thereby reducing index of poverty in the society and increasing GDP of the economy. It is an increasingly attractive option to secondary school graduates as well as adults who are striving to find careers that are exciting and offer opportunities for personal and financial freedom. Employability through creativity enables young graduates look beyond White Collar jobs, by creating initiatives and going into new ventures and become pioneers.

Ademola, (2005) also noted that secondary school emphasizes on the acquisition of skills and application of business laws to solving business problems and provide services. That is, secondary school has the potentials of making individuals self-reliant.

This is because the competency base nature of secondary school exposes students to training that will enable them to put up good business services for which people will be willing to pay.

The National Policy on Education (FRN 2004) considered secondary school as a veritable tool for preparing students for free enterprise economy as employees, employers and self-employed. Therefore, the skills required by businessmen for the successful operation of business enterprise cannot be overemphasized, as it will help to alleviate poverty and unemployment growth rate and make individuals become self-reliant. As earlier noted employability is not just gaining a graduate job or those who cannot find paid employment but for everyone whether employed or not. This is because when one is gainfully employed, he can also establish a business of his own so as to acquire more wealth and also to employ other people, thereby helping to reduce unemployment.

There are several employability skills for achieving laudable objectives in the curriculum, but those skills required of secondary school graduates for employability are discussed here: Management skills are those skills required of prospective graduates of secondary school to start, develop and successfully manage an enterprise in an efficient and most profiting manner. Igbo (1995) identified those skills to include ability to plan, organize, control, supervise, direct, forecast, coordinate and motivate employees so as to encourage them put in their best to achieve organizational goals.

Rowell, (2008) explained that no matter how hard you work or how brilliant ideas you may have, if you cannot connect with people who work around and outside, your professional life will suffer. The need for Human relations skill is thus emphasized in the above assertion. Human relations according to Uche (2008) gives the entrepreneurs the ability to evaluate public attitude toward the enterprise, identify policies, procedures and institute programmes that will earn public understanding and acceptance. Also, the ability to relate well with coworkers, accept criticism, advice and suggestions from others, exercise confidence, good judgments, and the ability to develop good customer relationship and all Human relations skills required for employability of graduates of secondary school.

The office machine operation skills required by secondary school graduates may include a fair knowledge of how to operate the computer, photocopier, fax machine, scanner, laminator and the adding machine. In addition to the ability to operating these business machines, prospective secondary school graduates should be able to use software packages like word-processing, excel/spreadsheet and computer graphics.

Akpotowho (2005) opined that communication is mainly concerned with human behavior at work. He further expressed that it is a vital aspect of organizational behavior. Accordingly, managers of business organizations should develop the ability and potentials of spending most of their productive time communicating with employees, customers, creditors, suppliers and all other stakeholders in the business.

Finance according to Uche (2008) is said to be a major lubricant to any economic endeavour. An accounting graduate of secondary school is required to possess skills that will enable him/her, source, manage and utilize funds in the most prudential manner. The possession of relevant accounting skills like processing accounts receivable and payables, processing inventories, preparing simple financial statements to ascertain profit or loss therein, a good level of proficiency in general and numerical calculations, operating the petty cashbook and a knowledge of maintaining the payrolls are all required of graduates for skillful employability.

From the above, it is implied that the accounting graduates of secondary school must possess relevant skills in order to find the labour market, most rewarding and favourable in terms of creating jobs for themselves instead of seeking for jobs where none existed.

Statement of the Problem

The National Policy on Education (FRN 2004) pointed out clearly that education is an instrument for the development of the nation and her citizens towards self-reliance. To this end, secondary school as a programme that prepares the recipient with the necessary skills and competencies that will enable graduates in the absence of paid employment, to establish centres where they can render both secretarial, distributive and accounting service to their clients is urgently needed. In this vein, secondary school programme is meant to equip her graduates with the right skills that will enable them to engage in a life of work and in paid employment after graduation from the training institute.

From the ongoing, it may not be accepted in totality that secondary school has been effective in inculcating into students the required employability skills. It has been observed that most secondary school students, graduate without the necessary employability skills required to successfully operate business enterprises of their own. Thus adding to the number of unemployed graduates in the society instead of helping to reduce unemployment by creating job for themselves and employing others.

Purpose of the Study

The major purpose of the paper is to examine the skills required of secondary school graduates for employability in Ika South Local Government Area. Specifically the paper:

1. Examine the management skills required of secondary school graduates for employability
2. Examine the Human relations and communication skills required of secondary school graduates for employability
3. Examine the marketing and accounting skills required of secondary school graduates for employability
4. Examine the office machine operation skills required of secondary school graduates for employability

Research Questions

The paper will answer the following research questions:

1. What are the management skills required by secondary school graduates for employability?
2. What are the Human relations and communication skills required by secondary school graduates for employability?
3. What are the marketing and accounting skills required by secondary school graduates for employability?
4. To what extent are the office machine operation skills required by secondary school graduates for employability?

Hypotheses

1. **Ho:** There is no significant difference in the mean responses of employers and employees on the relevance of management skills as skills required of secondary school graduates for employability.
2. **Ho:** There is no significant difference in the mean responses of employers and employees on the relevance of Human relations and communication skills as the skills required of secondary school graduates for employability.

Methodology

The research design used in this study is the survey design. The population of the study comprises of 50 employers and 50 students of business studies. A systematic random sample technique was used to select 20 employers and 30 students of business studies which gave the total number of 50 that was drawn from the entire population as a whole. A well structured questionnaire was used for data collection. The questionnaire was made up of (20) items in cluster of (5) items for each of the (4) research question earlier formulated. The instrument consists of a four point likert rating scale of Highly required (HR), Required (R), Fairly required (FR) and Not required (NR). The questionnaire was validated by experts in the department of Business Education Delta State university, Abraka and was subjected to reliability test.

Mean and standard deviation was used to analyze the data obtained. For the purpose of decision making, a mean of 2.50 was used as the cutoff point. Thereby any mean rating of 2.50 and above was accepted while any value below 2.50 is regarded as rejected. The hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance using student t-test.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

The results are presented below in line with the research questions and the hypotheses.

Research Question 1

What are the management skills required of business studies graduates for employability in Ika South Local Government Area of Delta State

S/N	STATEMENTS	HR	R	FR	NR	X	SD	Decision
1.	Ability to set appropriate goals	25	15	8	2	3.26	0.88	Accepted
2.	Ability to plan effectively for goals attainment	28	12	7	3	3.30	0.93	Accepted
3.	Ability to organize resources (human, material) for goal attainment	31	11	6	2	3.42	0.86	Accepted
4.	Ability to implement plans for goals attainment	25	14	3	8	3.12	1.09	Accepted
5.	Ability to supervise work and employee effectively	28	18	4	-	3.48	0.65	Accepted
	Grand mean and standard deviation					3.32	0.88	Accepted

The result in table 1 above shows that the respondents agreed that business studies graduates require management skills for employability with the grand mean of 3.32 and grand standard deviation 0.88 respectively. Therefore all the items are required thus they are relevant.

Research Question 2

To what extent are Human relations and communication skills required of business studies graduates for employability in Ika South Local Government Area in Delta State?

S/N	STATEMENTS	HR	R	FR	NR	X	SD	Decision
6.	Ability to create a positive atmosphere of respect and sharing	25	15	8	2	3.26	0.88	Accepted

7.	Ability to work and relate well with others	30	11	7	2	3.30	0.88	Accepted
8.	Ability to use good judgment in work environment	38	6	3	3	3.58	0.86	Accepted
9.	Ability to adapt easily and cheerfully to change	30	8	8	4	3.28	1.01	Accepted
10.	Possessing a high degree of writing and proofreading skills	30	17	2	1	3.52	0.68	Accepted
11.	Ability to speak clearly and listen without interruption	40	10	-	-	3.80	0.40	Accepted
12.	Ability to recognize and be able to reverse/ show tolerance	37	6	4	3	3.54	0.89	Accepted
13.	Ability to accept other people's advice and suggestion	45	2	2	1	3.82	0.60	Accepted
	Grand mean and standard deviation					3.52	0.78	Accepted

The data in table II shows that responding rating of the Human relations and communication skills required of business studies graduates with a grand mean of 3.52 which is greater than 2.50 and a standard deviation of 0.78 showing how heterogeneous the opinions of the students are on the Human relations and communication skills required of business studies graduates.

Research Question 3

Table III: To what extent are accounting skills required of business studies graduates in Ika South Local Government Area of Delta State?

S/N	STATEMENTS	HR	R	FR	NR	X	SD	Decision
14.	Ability to know sources of funds	10	25	15	-	2.90	0.71	Accepted
15.	Ability to prepare payroll and understand various deductions	28	11	6	5	3.24	1.02	Accepted
16.	Ability to process account payable and receivable	16	23	4	7	2.96	0.98	Accepted
17.	Ability to keep sales and purchase records	33	11	3	3	3.48	0.86	Accepted
18.	Ability to calculate gross and net profit	25	15	6	4	3.22	0.95	Accepted
19.	Ability to determine employees benefit	30	10	8	2	3.36	0.89	Accepted
20.	Ability to source for loans	28	13	5	4	3.30	0.95	Accepted
21.	A knowledge of federal, state, local regulations, levies and tax levies	45	3	2	-	3.86	0.45	Accepted
22.	Ability to reconcile accounts of customers	45	3	-	2	3.82	0.63	Accepted
	Grand mean and standard deviation					3.35	0.83	Accepted

The data in table III above shows that the respondent rating of the accounting skills required of business studies graduates with the grand mean of 3.35 and the grand standard deviation of 0.83 which is accepted.

Research Question IV

To what extent are office machine operation skills required of business studies graduates for employability in Ika South L.G.A. of Delta State

S/N	STATEMENTS	HR	R	FR	NR	X	SD	Decision
23.	Ability to arrange the computer and its other peripherals	22	16	6	6	3.08	1.02	Accepted
24.	Ability to operate the computer	25	12	8	5	3.14	1.03	Accepted

25.	Ability to store and retrieve information using electronic device	30	12	6	2	3.40	0.86	Accepted
26.	Ability to operate the photocopying machines	45	-	-	1	3.86	0.49	Accepted
27.	Ability to operate and use the calculating machines	24	12	11	3	3.14	0.97	Accepted
28.	Ability to operate the billing machine	21	16	13	-	3.16	0.82	Accepted
29.	Ability to operate and use the laminating machines	38	7	3	2	3.62	0.78	Accepted
30.	A knowledge of the operation and use of the duplicating and dictating machines	46	2	1	1	3.86	0.53	Accepted
	Grand mean and standard deviation					3.41	0.81	Accepted

The analysis in the above table shows that the respondents rating of the office machine operation skills required of business studies graduates with the grand mean of 3.41 which greater than 2.50 and the grand standard deviation of 0.81 shows that all items were required for employability. Hence, office machine operation skills are required by business studies graduates for employability.

TEST OF HYPOTHESES

Two null hypotheses were formulated and tested in this study. The results of these hypotheses are as follows:

H₀₁: There is no significant difference between mean response of employers and employees on the relevance of management skills as skills required of business studies graduates for employability.

Table 5

Result of t-test analysis of H₀

GROUP	N	x	SD	LEVEL OF SIG.	DF	T. CAL	T. CRIT.	DECISION
Employers	20	3.28	0.88	0.5	48	0.29	2.021	Accepted
Employees	30	3.36	0.86					

The result of the hypotheses above reveals that T. calculated of 0.29 is less than T. critical of 2.021 at 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the hypotheses stated earlier is accepted.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference between the mean responses of employers and employees on the relevance of public and communication skills as the skills required of business studies graduates for employability.

Table 6

Result of t-test analysis of H₀₂

GROUP	N	x	SD	LEVEL OF SIG.	DF	T. CAL	T. CRIT.	DECISION
Employers	20	3.42	1.15	0.05	48	0.17	0.34	Accepted
Employees	30	3.60	0.66					

The result of the t-test analysis of H₀₂ reveals that t calculated of 0.17 is less than the critical value of 2.021 at 0.05 level of significance. This implies that there is no significant difference between the mean response of employers and employees on the relevance of human relations and communication skills as skills required of business studies graduates for employability. Thus, the hypothesis H₀₂ is accepted.

DISCUSSION

Results from the t-test analysis and presentation of the employability skills based on the responses of employers and employees to the questionnaire items indicate that there is no significant difference in their views on the employability skills required of business studies graduates. The study also shows that business education equips people with relevant skills for self-reliance, encourages people to skilled labour jobs, encourages effectiveness and efficiency in the workplace, make individuals to be independent and enhances gainful employment for individuals. This finding is in connection with the findings of Ademola (2005) who noted that business education emphasizes on the acquisition of skills and application of business laws to solving business

problems and provide services. That is, business education has the potentials of making individuals self-reliant. But one will take solace in words of Sher (2000) who asserted that there is no correlation between levels of formal education and the ability to make money.

CONCLUSION

From the findings of the study, it is concluded that Business studies graduates required management skills for employability. However, business studies graduates required human relation and communication skills for employability. It was also observed that business studies graduates required accounting skills for employability, business studies graduates required office machine operation skills for employability.

Computer skills (word processing skills) are highly required of secondary school graduates for working in modern offices. Skills like typing using the appropriate finger skills, taking shorthand dictation and transcribe on the computer, editing, formatting and printing typed documents, checking and correcting errors, storing and retrieving documents, and operating photocopy and duplicating machines like the scanner are some basic areas of word processing that a typist/secretary must be abreast. Computer skills such as word processing have brought about a lot of improvement and efficiency over the previous manual operations. Also of note is the ability to communicate.

The office activities is centered on communication of one form or the other either orally or written. A communicatively competent person knows what to say and how to do it in order to optimize the conditions of a dialogue. To this end there is the requirement of communicative competence, emphasizing the abilities to adapt messages appropriately to the interaction context, identify preferred communication channels for example telephone hotlines, radio announcements, news conferences, and faxes to communicate with the organization publics. Ability to relate information appropriately to receivers, choose the right media for sending information, word information appropriately, address callers with appropriate politeness, display good listening skills on the job, interpret messages correctly.

Equally of note is that many employees loses their jobs because of poor interpersonal/human relation skills, poor attitudes and inability to adapt to changes brought about by technological changes, that employers or business executives used to request for potential employees who are honest, reliable, punctual, dedicated, pleasant, responsive and free from all vices. Knowledge of basic accounting/bookkeeping skills is also required for the day to administering of the office. Most office functions of today are no longer rigid as they were before but now flexible such that an office employee could be able to function on any assigned aspect of the office routine for example most banks employees today do not possess degrees/certificates in banking.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Basic management course should be incorporated into the business education curriculum and taught to students at the undergraduate levels.
2. Skills as human skills and communication skills should be made part of the business studies curriculum at secondary school levels.
3. All the necessary accounting skills should also be incorporated in the accounting component of business studies curriculum at secondary school levels.
4. Government should provide modern office machines and equipments for the teaching and learning of business studies at secondary school levels, to enhance the inculcation of the needed employability skills.

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