

Assessment of Views of Business Education Graduates on the Effect of Technological Advancement on their Employability in Nigeria Labour Market

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Abstract

The study investigates the effect of technological advancement on the employability business education graduates in Nigeria labour market. The study had four specific objectives and, as a guide, four null hypotheses were formulated. Descriptive survey design method was adopted for the study. Four rating structured questionnaire titled "Modern Technology and Employability skills" (MTES) was employed to generate data from 89 respondents that participated in the 2012/2013 business education postgraduates entry examination. Data collected were coded using SPSS to run Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient to test null hypothesis one. Chi-square was used to test null hypothesis two, while ANNOVA was used to test null hypotheses three and four. All the four hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. The analysis reveals, among other findings, that business education curriculum contents in Nigeria do not equip students with generic skills required for their employability in Nigerian labour market in the present advanced technological era. Based on the findings, the researchers recommend that all the major skills in the modern technologies needed by the Nigerian labour market should be integrated into the curriculum of business education programme in Nigerian universities.

Keywords: Business Education, Technological Advancement, Employability, Nigerian Labour Market.

Introduction

Graduate employability skills are set of understandings and personal attributes that make graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen

occupations (Yorke, 2008). Present employers at the national and global economies tend to recruit graduates with high soft skills competencies. Thus to face the 21st century challenges of increased competition in fieldwork, most employers today need applicants with some ICT skills. Supporting this view, Winterbotham et al (2001) affirmed that serious employers are less demanding of academic excellence and technical skills, and consider them trainable if candidates are able to demonstrate positive attributes and soft skills. This, therefore, heightened the expectations of employers of labour in Nigeria with a demand for work ready graduates who have intellectual capacity and are also equipped with ICT skills.

The changing trend in the labour market profiles have increased the complexity of skills required by today's workforce and threatened the position of graduates that are ill-equipped with knowledge of modern technology. Considering the importance of ICT skills across all sectors and job types in Nigeria, the ability of applicants to have acquired basic skills in ICT, and being familiar with computer usage, may open up a wide range of employment opportunities and increase their marketability in the workplace. As a result of the new demand of the labour market, there has been a consistent global call for tertiary institutions to equip students with ICT skills by integrating the skills into their curriculum. This will enable students to adequately acquire and develop the employability needed throughout the course of their studies (Brown et al., 2003).

Despite the importance of technological skills on employability of fresh graduates in Nigerian labour market, it is unfortunate that responses of employers of labour on competencies on the use of modern technology by recent graduates reveal that these skills are lacking. Corroborating this fact, Williams (2003) reported that graduates are deficient in transferable skills required of the workforce in the era of modern technology. Tymon (2011) added that employers view that graduates are not yet ready to enter and face the complexities and challenges of the world of work in the era of modern technology. To help students, universities have come under intense pressure to review their curricula so as to equip students with more than just academic skills (Abdul Rahim, 2000). This opinion was also shared by Singh and Singh (2008) who maintained that employers have urged universities to make more explicit efforts to develop the 'key', 'core', 'transferable', 'soft', 'employable' and/or 'generic skills' needed in many types of employment. This scenario prompted the researchers to investigate the views of business education graduates on the effect of technological advancement on their employability in the Nigerian labour market.

The study determines the: (i) relationship between business education curriculum contents in Nigeria and generic skills required for their employability in technological era and advancement; (ii) impact of modern technology on employability of business education graduates in Nigeria; (iii) difference in the perception of respondents based on the institutions on the effect of modern technology on their employability in Nigeria; and (vi) difference in the perception of respondents based on the area of their specialization (accounting, distributive and secretarial education) on the effect of modern technology on their employability in Nigeria.

Accordingly, the following null hypotheses were raised and tested at the 0.05 level of significance.

1. There is no significant relationship between business education curriculum contents in Nigeria and generic skills required for their employability in advanced technological era.
2. Modern technology has no significant effect on employability of business education graduates in the Nigerian labour market.

3. There is no significant difference in the perception of respondents based on the effect of modern technology on their employability in the Nigerian labour market.
4. There is no significant difference in the perception of respondents based on the area of their specialization (accounting, distributive and secretarial education) on the effect of modern technology on their employability in the Nigerian labour market.

Review of Empirical Literature

The study was built on the theoretical framework of Winterbotham et al (2001) who observe that employers are demanding demonstration of positive attributes and ability to use soft skills. The theory considered the use of modern technology as essential for graduates to gain a foothold in the labour market. The advocates of this theory were of the opinion that ICT skills is a dominant engine for productivity improvement and business opportunities and a key factor for generating future employment. Several authors in Nigeria such as Obiunu and Ebunu (2010); Oduma (2010); Benjamin (2011); Imeokparia and Ediabonyia (2012) opine that basic ICT skills are necessary for getting, keeping, and doing well on a job. Sharing this view, Overtom (2000) argues that essential transferable knowledge, skills and attitudes are needed to thrive in the 21st century workplace. The theory had support of International Employer Barometer (IEB) that maintains that skills employers value most highly among graduates include 'soft' and 'hard' skills - and measures satisfaction ratings on how far graduates demonstrate these capabilities. It also surveys the methods of recruitment employers find the most useful and effective.

Similar study of this nature was conducted by several authors. A research was conducted by Oduma (2010) titled "A Survey of Business Education Graduates and Employers Expectations for Gainful Employment". The study surveys the Employers expectations of the General Work Competences needed by business education graduates for gainful employment in organizations. Descriptive survey design was adopted for this study. The respondents consisted of employers of labour (Chief Executive Officers) responsible for employment exercises which were drawn randomly from government and private establishments in Ebonyi State, Nigeria. Two hundred and eighty (280) Chief Executives were used in this study to serve as the sample for the study. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire developed by the researcher. Weighted mean and standard deviation were used for answering research questions.

The study revealed, among others, that employers of labour desired business education graduates to possess ICT skills and leadership competencies as a pre-requisite for gainful employment in establishments and organizations. It was recommended, among others, that business education programme in tertiary institutions should be restructured to enable the recipients acquire cluster of general work competencies or organizational behaviours desired by employers of labour.

Imeokparia and Ediabonyia (2012) conducted a study on "Employability of Business Education Graduates in Nigeria". Four research questions were raised in the study and three null hypotheses were formulated and tested. 60 postgraduate students of University of Benin, Nigeria were used for the study. Four rating scale structured questionnaire titled "Employability of Business Education Graduates Questionnaire (EBEGQ)" was used to generate data from the respondents. The Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 16.0 was used in analyzing the data.

The inferential statistics used was the student t-test of independent samples and Analysis of Variance (ANNOVA). The analysis revealed, among others, that the thinking skills

of Business Education graduates were not as high as that of Personal Quality skill. One of the recommendations provided was that Institutions should liaise with industries around to form a kind of partnership to ease the transmission of these skills. That is, having school - industry partnership would enhance the availability of these facilities since many of them are not adequate in the schools.

Udofia et al (2012) carried out a research titled "Instructional Variables And Students' Acquisition of Employable Skills In Vocational education in Nigerian Technical Colleges". As a guide to the researchers, three research questions and three hypotheses were formulated. The population of the study comprised of senior technical II students in the six technical colleges in Akwa Ibom state, Nigeria. The population size was 240. A random sampling technique was used to obtain a sample size of 120. The study adopted a correlational survey design. 28 item structured questionnaire titled, Students' Acquisition of Employable Skills Questionnaire (SAESQ) with a four-point rating response options were used for data collection. Mean, Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) and Regression analysis were used for data analysis. The results indicate that there was significant relationship between teacher quality and students' acquisition of employable skills. The researchers recommend that modern technical equipment, tools, machines and instructional materials should be made available for students practical lessons in Technical Colleges throughout the country.

Methodology

Descriptive survey design method was adopted for this study. The population of the study consist of 89 fresh graduates who attended 2012/2013 postgraduate admission examination in Ahmadu Bello Universities, Zaria, Nigeria. Four rating scale questionnaire were used to generate data from the respondents. The questionnaire was adapted and adopted from Centre for Excellence in Embedding, Enhancing and Integrating Employability. The item consisted of a list of 21st century employability skills/attributes required by the labour market.

To determine the validity of the instrument, consultations were made with experts in business education and research methodology in Ahmadu Bello University Zaria, Nigeria who vetted the items. Their corrections and suggestions were incorporated into the final copy of the test before they were administered. To test the reliability of the instrument, the researcher distributed 20 copies of the questionnaire to postgraduate students in business education programmes in Ahmadu Bello University Zaria, Nigeria for the pilot study. Scripts collected were tallied and subjected to statistical analysis using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The result of the test gave reliability co-efficient of 0.76.

In the study, respondents were given a list of 20 employability skills/attributes and asked whether they felt that their training have provided them opportunities to gain any of these skills and attributes whilst they were at undergraduate level. 83 copies of questionnaire were retrieved and were subjected to statistical analyses. In the test of null hypotheses, Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was used to test null hypothesis one, Chi-square was used to test for null hypothesis two and ANNOVA was used to test null hypotheses three and four. All the null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

Results and Discussion

Test of Null Hypotheses

Null Hypothesis One

There is no significant relationship between business education curriculum contents in Nigeria and generic skills required for their employability in technological era and advancement.

Result of Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient used to test null hypothesis one is as presented in Table 1

Table 3:

Test of the relationship between business education curriculum contents and generic employability skills in technological era

Variables	Mean	Std. Dev.	Df	r-cal	r-crit	Sig. (2-tailed)
Business Education Curriculum	2.99	0.52				
Generic Employability Skills	3.41	1.55	81	1.08	.195	0.041

The result of the hypothesis one presented in Table 2 shows r-cal. value of 1.08 less than 0.195 r-crit. value. This can also be seen in probability value of $0.041 < 0.05$. The result therefore shows that there is no significant relationship between business education curriculum contents in Nigeria and generic skills required for their employability in advanced technological era of the Nigerian labour market. Hence the null hypothesis was retained.

Null Hypothesis Two

Modern technology has no significant effect on employability skills of business education graduates in Nigeria.

Analysis of data used to test null hypothesis two is as presented in Table 2

Table 3:

Test of The Effect of Modern Technology on Employability Skills of Business Education Graduates In Nigeria

Tick Options	Observed N	Expected N	Residual	Chi-Cal	Chi-Crit	Df	Asymp. Sig.
Agree	12	27.7	-15.7	14.91 ^a	5.99	2	0.000
Disagree	22	27.7	-5.7				
Strongly disagree	49	27.7	22..7				
Total	83	83.1					

The result of Chi-Square used to test null hypothesis one shows calculated value of 14.91 greater than 5.99 Chi-Critical at 0.05 level significance. The analysis therefore shows that Modern technology significantly affect the employability skills of business education graduates in Nigeria. Hence the null hypothesis was not retained.

Null Hypothesis Three

There is no significant difference in the perception of respondents' base on their institutions on the effect of modern technology on their employability skills in Nigeria.

Result of Analysis of variance (ANNOVA) used to test null hypothesis three is as presented in Table 1

Table 3:

Test of The Difference In The Perception of Respondents Based on The Institutions on The Effect of Modern Technology on Their Employability Skills In Nigeria

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F-cal	F-crit	Sig.
Between Groups	79.56	11	7.23	1.59	2.60	.051
Within Groups	1984.21	72	27.56			
Total	2063.07	83	34.79			

The result of data used to test null hypothesis three revealed that the sum of squares between groups was 79.56 with a mean square of 7.23. Similarly, the sum of squares within groups was 1984.21 with a mean square of 27.56. The degree of freedom was 11 and 72 respectively. The F-cal value was $1.59 < 2.60$ F-crit, the result shows that there is no significant difference in the perception of respondents regardless of their institutions. Hence the analysis shows that all the respondents regardless of the universities share the same opinion that inadequacy in modern technological skills affects their employability in the Nigerian labour market. Thus the null hypothesis was retained.

Null Hypothesis Four

There is no significant difference in the perception of respondents' base on the area of their specialization (accounting, distributive and secretarial education students) on the effect of modern technology on their employability skills in Nigeria.

Result of data used to test null hypothesis four is as presented in Table 4

Table 4:

Test of The Difference In The Perception of Respondents Based on Their Area of Specialisation on The Effect of Modern Technology on Their Employability Skills In Nigeria

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F-cal	F-crit	Sig.
Between Groups	83.88	11	7.63	1.44	2.60	.052
Within Groups	2002.10	72	27.81			
Total	2130.03	83	34.44			

Analysis of data used to test null hypothesis four indicated the sum of squares between groups was 83.88 with a mean square of 7.63. Similarly, the sum of squares within groups was 2002.10 with a mean square of 27.81. The degree of freedom was 11 and 72, respectively. The F-cal value was $1.44 < 2.60$ F-crit. The result therefore shows that there is no significant difference in the perception of respondents regardless of their area of specialization. Hence the accounting, distributive and secretarial education students share

the same opinion that the use modern technology affects their employability in the Nigerian labour market. Thus the null hypothesis was retained.

Discussion of the Findings

The outcome of the research work reveals that there is no link between business education curriculum contents and generic skills required for the employability of business education graduates in the advanced technological era of the Nigerian labour market. This result further affirmed the study of Ranasinghe, (1992); Lindsay, (2002) who acknowledged that a gap still exists between the level of employability skills acquired by graduates and the entry level work requirements in fieldwork. Hagan (2004) opines that there is conflict between the requirements of industry for graduates trained in the specific tools and methodologies that they are currently using, and the desire of universities to teach students in a broader and more theoretical way in order to equip them to deal with what is likely to be demanded of them in the labour market.

The study further revealed that the introduction of modern technology into fieldwork has affected the employability of business education graduates in Nigeria. The result is similar with that of Ahmed (2006) who reported that the emergence of skills gap in the employer/graduate interface is giving extra pressure on doubts in employer and business education graduates interface in the Nigerian labour market. Andries (2008) further affirms that, across all industries, the complexity of jobs is increasing. This trend is driven by innovations in information technology (IT) and information and communication technologies (ICT). Senior (2009) attested that globalization and economic recession are introducing extra pressure on business education graduates in relation to the large number of job losses around the world.

The finding of the study also shows that respondents shared the same opinion regardless of their area of specialization and the institutions from where they graduate. They all opined that modern technology has affected their employability in the Nigerian labour market. This finding is in line with that of Nigerian Federal Ministry of Education (2006) and other employers of labour who reported that there is general mismatch between teaching in the institutions of higher learning and the needs of the labour market. Bennis and O'Toole (2009) further reported that generally business education curriculum is in the wrong track. They stressed that the curriculum face intense criticism for failing to impart useful skills, failing to prepare leaders, and failing to instil norms of ethical behaviour that will lead graduates to good corporate jobs in the technological era. Garrido, Joe and Andrew (2012) endorsed that generally the diffusion of information and communication technologies (ICTs) across all economic sectors is placing new demands on workers' skills. They stressed that the changing skill set is both expanding employment opportunities and imposing new demands on disadvantaged groups.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

Based on the review of related literature, analysis and interpretation of the results obtained and personal experiences of the researchers, the following are the major conclusions of the study:

- (i) That students are not satisfied with the requisite work skills in the curriculum content of business education in Nigerian universities, and that there is mismatch between the training provided to business education students and the needs of Nigerian labour

market. Hence, business education graduates are finding it difficult to meet the expectations of the employers of labour.

- (ii) That due to introduction of modern technology in the fieldwork, business education graduates find it difficult to compete with their colleagues in the Nigerian labour market. As a result, the change in the labour market profile has put extra pressure on business education graduates searching for employment in Nigeria.
- (iii) That the curriculum of business education in all the institutions regardless of area of specialisation, as it is presently, is inadequate and it has very little capacity to develop students' skills to meet the challenges in the era of advanced technology in Nigeria.

Recommendations

Based on the foregoing conclusions, the following recommendations are hereby made:

- (i) Modern technology needed in the era of technological advancement should be integrated into the curriculum of business education programme in Nigerian universities. In addition, lecturers currently employed by institutions offering business education courses have to receive further training in using technologies in teaching the new body of knowledge. This will enable graduates possess the much needed 21st century employability skills that will facilitate their job opportunities in the labour market.
- (II) National universities commission and other agencies of education should develop a benchmark curriculum of business education that will emphasize on relevant skills and competencies. This will help the universities to take vital initiatives to review the attributes needed by business education graduates as well as to support generic skills development needed by all students while in school.
- (III) Government, private and public sector institutions, non governmental organizations (NGOS), including philanthropists, should assist in providing modern infrastructural facilities and instructional materials to business education programmes in the Nigerian tertiary educational institutions so as to ease transmission of generic skills to students.

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