OFFICE COMPETENCIES REQUIRED OF BUSINESS EDUCATION GRADUATES FOR EFFECTIVE PERFORMANCE IN MODERN OFFICES IN IMO STATE

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ABSTRACT

This study was carried out to ascertain the office competencies required of business education graduates for effective performance in modern offices in Imo State. Two research questions guided the study and two null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study consisted of 201 managers in private and public organizations in Imo State. There was no sampling. A structured questionnaire containing 17 items was used for data collection. The instrument was validated by experts in the field of business education in the Department of Technology and Vocational Education and measurement and evaluation unit of the Department of Educational Foundation. Pilot test was used to establish the reliability of the instrument and Cronbach alpha was used to obtain the reliability coefficients of 0.97 and 0.94 for clusters B1 to B2 respectively with an overall coefficient of 0.96. One hundred and eighty nine duly completed copies of the questionnaire were retrieved and used for data analysis. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions and to determine the homogeneity of the respondents' ratings while the z-test was used to test the null hypotheses. Findings revealed that respondents agreed that electronic publishing and electronic collaborative competencies were required of business education graduates for effective performance in modern offices. The findings also showed that ownership of organizations was not a significant factor on managers' ratings of competencies required of business education graduates for effective performance in modern offices. The researchers concluded that equipping business education students with these competencies will help them to performance office tasks effectively when employed in business organizations upon graduation. It was recommended among others that business education lecturers should lay more emphasis on equipping their students with electronic publishing and electronic collaborative competencies identified by respondents as required by business education graduates for effective performance in modern offices.

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Key Words: Office competencies, business education graduates, modern offices

Introduction

Higher education in Nigeria is the education given to students after secondary education in universities, colleges of education and polytechnics. The aim of tertiary education is to develop students with relevant skills needed to contribute to the development of the society. In recognition of this importance of higher education to the development of Nigerian society, the Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 2013) place a great premium on vocational and technical education of which business education is a sub-set.

Business education which is offered at the universities and colleges of education is concerned with the development of saleable skills to enable an individual to function effectively in the world of work (Onojetah, 2012). Abuokwen (2010) asserted that business education is an education for business or training in business skills required for use in business offices, clerical occupation and business policy analysis. Office education, according to Amoor (2009), is a group of courses designed to prepare an individual to acquire specific skills and competencies for efficient office services.

The dynamism of the 21st century has propelled office education programme in tertiary institutions to emphasize more on preparing students in the current practices shaping today's modern offices. Modern offices are gazetted with information and communication technologies devoid of the manual way of performing office tasks. Nwazor and Onokpaunu (2016) stated that modern offices are automated offices that provide new ways of performing daily business activities. In modern offices, tasks are performed electronically rather than manually. Business education programmes in Nigeria, however, are often criticized for deficiencies in producing competent students needed for optimum performance in technologically-oriented offices (Jackson, 2013). The outcome is graduates' poor performance in organizations, increase in graduate unemployment rate as well as global economy. Azike (2012) observed that business education programme has continued to produce incompetent graduates who cannot adapt to the technological changes.

Despite universities' efforts in equipping business education students with competencies and knowledge, it appears that the complaints are still prevalent that business education graduates possess little or no competencies for effective job performance in modern offices. So there is need to identify areas of competencies industries mostly required from graduates and incorporate them in the business education curriculum. Competencies are abilities, knowledge, attitudes and facts necessary for accomplishing tasks (Okoro, 2012). The success of business education programmes can be measured by the official duty performance level of graduates of the programme in the world of work. Office competencies for effective performance in modern offices include electronic publishing, electronic collaborative, electronic image processing, electronic communication and database management.

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Electronic publishing competencies enable office workers to work through a document and delete, insert and replace text, and also perform additional features such as creating, formatting, printing and saving of document without much stress (Brain & Stacey, 2010). Electronic publishing competencies are inevitable in the activities of modern offices because they enable office workers to utilize modern office machines for electronic printing of textbooks, journals, articles and newspapers. Electronic collaborative competencies on the other hand enable office workers to communicate without necessarily seeing one another. These competencies enable office workers to understand the benefits of team-work, collaboration and information sharing features of the modern office.

Presently, managers of public and private organizations have areas of emphasis in the selection and appointment of competent employees who would assist them in realizing the corporate objectives of their organizations. This emphasis is usually guided by the needs of the organizations in particular and the society in general. As societal needs are changing every day, it is necessary to develop appropriate competencies to meet them. As changes in technology are dynamic, managers are shifting their emphasis from time to time to suit the technological changes. This means that managers will seek for competencies in order to meet up with the trend in modern offices.

The extent to which graduates of business education possess the required modern office competencies seems to vary on account of managers of various types of organizations. Managers of private organizations could be more concerned with having a workforce of competent graduates with minimal incompetence because they are more profit driven than managers of public offices. In agreement, Odunaike and Amoda (2013) revealed that competency plays a very significant role in driving away the indolent ones in business education professionalism. Akpomi and Ordu (2009) reported that many private business organizations have computers and other modern office technological gadgets. Some however do not have and this affect the productivity of business education graduates in such business organizations. In support, Aliata and Hawa (2014) disclosed among others that the availability and use of modern office equipment will inevitably affect the activities and output of business education graduates in offices and business organizations. Currently, the fact that Nigerian business education graduates are roaming the streets instead of being employed in business offices intensified the need for this study which sought to determine the office competencies required of business education graduates for effective performance in modern offices.

Statement of the Problem

Before the advent of ICT in offices, business education graduates mainly required basic office competencies such as ability to read, write and communicate, keyboarding with speed and accuracy and ability to follow instructions to perform

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office functions. However, the invasion of ICT in offices demands that business education graduates need other competencies in order to fit into the era of technologically induced modern offices. Poor acquisition of these competencies by business education graduates would likely render them unfit for modern office functions. The problem of this study, therefore, is that there seem to be a wide gap between competencies required by business education graduates for effective performance in modern business organizations and what they are being taught in the programme. This could be the reason why many Nigerian business education graduates are roaming the streets instead of being employed in business offices (Azike, 2012). If this trend is not addressed, it could worsen the already existing graduate unemployment rates. It could also lead to non-achievement of objectives of business education programme in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. Based on the foregoing, this study sought to determine the office competencies required of business education graduates for effective performance in modern offices.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study was to identify office competencies required of business education graduates for effective performance in modern offices in Imo State. Specifically, the study determined:

1. electronic publishing competencies required of business education graduates for effective performance in modern offices.
2. electronic collaborative competencies required of business education graduates for effective performance in modern offices.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What are the electronic publishing competencies required of business education graduates for effective performance in modern offices?
2. What are the electronic collaborative competencies required of business education graduates for effective performance in modern offices?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

1. There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of managers in private and public organizations on the electronic publishing competencies required of business education graduates for effective performance in modern offices.
2. There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of managers in private and public organizations on the electronic collaborative competencies required of business education graduates for effective performance in modern offices.

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Method

The design adopted for this study was the descriptive survey design. The study was carried out in Imo State. The population for the study consisted of 201 managers of private and public business organizations in Imo State obtained from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry Imo State. The population was not too large and therefore there was no sampling. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire on a four point rating scale ofStrongly Agreed - 4 Point, Agreed - 3 Point**,** Disagreed - 2 PointandStrongly Disagreed - 1 Point

The face validity of the instrument was ascertained using the opinions of two experts in business education and one expert in measurement and evaluation. The questionnaire was pilot-tested using 20 managers of private and public business organizations in Abia State who were not part of the population. Data from the pilot test were analyzed using Cronbach Alpha to establish the internal consistency of the instrument which yielded values of 0.97 and 0.94 for clusters B1 to B2 respectively with an overall reliability coefficient value of 0.96. The researcher and three research assistants distributed copies of the questionnaire to the managers of public and private business organizations in their offices. Mean scores and standard deviation were used to analyze data relating to the research questions while z-test was used to test the null hypotheses. A null hypothesis was rejected where the calculated z-value is equal to or greater than the critical z-value; otherwise the null hypothesis was retained.

Results

Table 1

Respondents' mean ratings on the electronic publishing competencies required of business education graduates for effective performance in modern offices

N = 189

S/N	Electronic publishing competencies	Mean	SD	Remarks
1	ability to manage files and fonts with Adobe InDesign	3.09	0.81	Agreed
2	skill in formatting documents	3.47	0.63	Agreed
3	ability to apply standard planning tools for printing design	3.40	0.67	Agreed
4	skill in preparing copy from audio recordings for transcriptions	3.24	0.70	Agreed
5	skill in dictating text and commands while using speech recognition software	3.30	0.67	Agreed
6	skills in graphics file specifications	2.93	0.89	Agreed
7	ability to use Pagemaker	3.02	0.75	Agreed
8	ability to design layout of page elements	2.80	0.91	Agreed
9	ability to use illustrations in print designs	2.84	0.87	Agreed

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10	ability to use images	2.19	1.03	Disagreed
	Cluster Mean	**3.03**		**Agreed**

Table 1 show that out of the 10 items listed on electronic publishing competencies, respondents disagreed on one item (item 10) while they agreed on the remaining nine items. The cluster mean score of 3.03 shows that on the whole, managers of private and public organizations in the area of the study agreed that electronic publishing competencies are required of business education graduates for effective performance in modern offices. The highest deviation (1.03) amongst the responses is observed in item 10. This suggests that respondents are quite divided as to whether business education required ability to use images. There is homogeneity in other items amongst responses indicating a greater consensus of opinion.

Table 2
Respondents' mean ratings on the electronic collaborative competencies required of business education graduates for effective performance in modern offices

S/N	Electronic collaborative competencies	Mean	SD	Remarks
11	Ability to use proofHub to share information about organization's project	2.94	0.91	Agreed
12	Ability to use Mindmeister to plan or brainstorm with colleagues in the organization	3.16	0.67	Agreed
13	Ability to use Google Doc to create and share documents with colleagues in the office	3.34	0.63	Agreed
14	Ability to use SlideRocket to collaborate with colleagues on the same tasks irrespective of location	3.14	0.92	Agreed
15	Ability to use enterprise resource planning to design workflow and communications for collaborative projects	3.50	0.57	Strongly Agreed
16	Ability to use Bigmaker to discuss new business projects online	3.16	0.69	Agreed
17	Ability to use groupware to share ideas and projects with colleagues	3.48	0.62	Agreed
	Cluster Mean	**3.24**		**Agreed**

Table 2 show that respondents rated only one item (item 16) strongly agreed while the remaining six items on electronic collaborative competencies are rated agreed. The cluster mean score of 3.24 shows that on the whole, managers of private and public organizations in the area of the study agreed that electronic collaborative competencies are required of business education graduates for effective performance in modern offices. The standard deviations for all the items are within the same range showing that the respondents are not wide apart in their ratings.

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Table 3: Summary of z-test analysis of managers in private and public organizations on the electronic publishing competencies required of business education graduates for effective performance in modern offices

Ownership of Organization	N	Mean	SD	df	z-cal	z-crit	Decision
private	118	3.25	0.69				
	187	1.36	1.96	Not Significant			
Public	71	3.10	0.79				

Table 3 shows that the calculated z - value of 1. 36 is less than the critical z - value of 1.96 (1.36 < 1.96) at 0.05 level of significance and 187 degree of freedom. This means that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of managers in private and public organizations on the electronic publishing competencies required of business education graduates for effective performance in modern offices. Therefore, the null hypothesis was accepted.

Table 4

Summary of z-test analysis of managers in private and public organizations on the electronic collaborative competencies required of business education graduates for effective performance in modern offices

Ownership of Organization	N	Mean	SD	df	z-cal	z-crit	Decision
private	118	3.32	0.58				
	187	0.81	1.96	Not Significant			
Public	71	3.24	0.70				

Table 4 shows that the calculated z - value of 0.81 is less than the critical z - value of 1.96 (0.81 < 1.96) at 0.05 level of significance and 187 degree of freedom. This means that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of managers in private and public organizations on the electronic collaborative competencies required of business education graduates for effective performance in modern offices. Therefore, the null hypothesis was accepted.

Discussion

Findings of the study indicated that respondents agreed that electronic publishing competencies are required of business education graduates for effective performance in modern offices. The findings of the study is in line with Olayanju and Asogwa (2010) who revealed that just as the business offices have changed as a result of the introduction of ICT in offices, so do business education graduates need to possess electronic publishing competencies such as word processing, data processing and reprographics in order to perform effectively in the offices. In support, Brain and Stacey (2010) posited thatelectronic publishing competencies are required of graduates of tertiary institutions so as to perform job tasks effectively. Brain and Stacey further stated that these competencies enable office workers to work through a

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document and delete, insert and replace text, and also perform additional features such as creating, formatting, printing and saving of document without much stress.

According to Onoyovwi (2007), to be relevant in today's office, electronic publishing literacy are a must for all business education graduates because it has simplified, through mechanization, all aspects of office functions and procedures. Even the much talked about paperless office of today is possible through the use of ICT. Onoyovwi further noted that business education graduates who are not well equipped in terms of new skills and competencies, knowledge and abilities required for today and tomorrow's office are sure to be embarrassed as their inadequate competencies will render them redundant or even throw them out of job.

The findings further revealed that there was no significant difference in the mean ratings of managers in private and public organizations in Imo State on the electronic publishing competencies required of business education graduates for effective performance in modern offices. This agrees with Onasanya et al. (2011) who found that managers generally agreed that graduates (business education graduates inclusive) require electronic publishing competencies to remain relevant in modern offices.

Findings of the study revealed that respondents agreed that electronic collaborative competencies are required of business education graduates for effective performance in modern offices. The findings of this study concurs with that of Roy (2012) which revealed that since electronic collaboration technologies are used to accomplish organizational goals in modern offices, business education graduates require such electronic collaboration competencies as relationship building, communication, collaboration, and internet skills, in order to succeed. Roy further stated that employees require relationship building skills that create team cohesion, sustainable relationships, encourage trust, team familiarity, and create a shared context among diverse team members. Wallar and Papadopoulos (2015) posited that electronic collaboration competencies help employees to decrease the intensity of conflicts, encourage the sharing of information online, build a sense of community, and promote clarity throughout the duration of a company project. Additionally, Vincent (2008) agreed that for graduates to be actively involved in e-collaboration, they need to possess telephone, internet and teleconferencing competencies.

Furthermore, the findings of the study indicated that managers in private organizations and their counterparts in public organizations did not differ significantly in their mean ratings on the electronic collaborative competencies required of business education graduates for effective performance in modern offices. This is in consonance with the findings of Moreover, Jafari, Ahmed, Dawal and Zayandehroodi (2010) which revealed that ownership of organizations did not influence managers' opinions on the electronic collaboration competencies required of business education graduates for effective performance in today's offices. Vincent (2008) in agreement stated that managers viewed possession of electronic collaborative competencies a must for every graduate who wants to succeed in modern offices.

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Conclusion

The findings have shown that employers (managers) want 'well-rounded' graduates with a broad range of competencies for performance in modern offices. The researchers conclude that equipping business education students with these competencies will help them to performance office tasks effectively when employed in business organizations upon graduation.

Recommendations

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

1. Business education lecturers should lay more emphasis on equipping their students with electronic publishing and electronic collaborative competencies identified in this study. This will help them to gain employment in modern business organizations upon graduation and perform office functions effectively.
2. Business education administrators should periodically organize ICT re-training programmes for lecturers to up-date their electronic publishing and electronic collaborative competencies so as to equip students with these competencies needed to perform job functions effectively on graduation.
3. Curriculum planners should review the curriculum of Business Education to incorporate electronic publishing and electronic collaborative competencies as required by the graduates for effective performance in business organizations.

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