



**BUSINESS TEACHERS PERCEPTION OF EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS REQUIRED FOR
SELF-RELIANCE BY BUSINESS STUDIES STUDENTS IN PUBLIC JUNIOR
SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN RIVERS STATE**

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Abstract

The study investigated the perception of business studies teachers in public junior secondary schools in Rivers State on employability skills required for self-reliance by business studies students. The descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. Two research questions and two hypotheses guided the study. The population for the study was one hundred and twenty Business Studies Teachers drawn from fifteen public junior secondary schools in Port Harcourt Local Government. The instrument used for data collection was a ten item structured questionnaire titled “Business Teachers Perception of Students' Employability Skills Questionnaire” (BTPSESQ). The reliability coefficient of 0.70 was obtained, using the test-retest method and Pearson Moment Correlation Coefficient. The instrument was validated by two experts in Business Education. One hundred and twenty copies of questionnaire were administered. However only ninety-six copies of the questionnaire were retrieved and analysed using mean for the research questions and z-test statistics for the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The study revealed that Office practice skills such as ability to manage information effectively; ability to use office equipment and facilities among others as well as ICT skills such as ability to operate the computer; ability to use internet network; ability and others were identified as required by business studies students for self-reliance. Based on the findings, it was recommended among others that students should be encouraged to explore and harness employment opportunities for self-reliance, the business studies curriculum be periodically reviewed to incorporate identified employability skills, also, that students be exposed to ICT facilities and other facilities for practical skills to enhance the development of the identified skills.

Keywords: *Employability skills, Business studies, Self-reliance, junior secondary schools*

Introduction

Education (formal or informal) provides for the development of skills. Education has a mode through which an individual obtains the requisite physical and mental abilities or competencies needed for the development of oneself and the society. Koko (2016) defined education as a structured, organized and formal process of training and instruction given to people in order to bring about effective learning which is observable.



The current 9-3-4 structure of education in Nigeria based on the National Policy on education clearly emphasized the acquisition and development of appropriate skills, abilities and competencies. The system consist of nine years of basic and compulsory education; including six years of primary level and three years of junior secondary level, three years at senior secondary level and four years of higher education. The federal government through its national policy on education succinctly spelt out the objectives and purpose for each level. The objectives at the secondary level (Junior and Senior) emphasizes among others, the need to prepare the individual for useful living within the society through the development of appropriate skills and preparing the individual for higher education (Ige, 2013). The introduction of this system of education has made business studies at the junior secondary level prominent and recognized (Emeasoba, 2015) as education for self-reliance and a skill oriented subject.

Business Studies is business education taught at the junior secondary level. At this level, which is the first three years of secondary education, students are trained to acquire knowledge in general education as well as integrated pre vocational skills, through integrated subjects such as office practice, commerce, bookkeeping, computer studies, keyboarding and shorthand (Koko, 2016); each forming complete subject units on their own. The curriculum of business studies as prescribed by the Comparative Education Study and Adaptation Centre (CESAC) 2007 in Emeasoba (2015) identified the following as objectives of business studies:

- a. To provide the orientation of basic skills with which to start an occupation for those who cannot continue training.
- b. To prepare students for further training in business studies
- c. To relate knowledge and skill to the national economy
- d. To develop basic skills in office occupations
- e. To provide basic business skills for personal use and for the future.

The above objectives are all in tandem with the fundamental and critical target of the National Economic Empowerment and Development Goals (MDGs) and have as their main thrust value orientation, wealth creation, unemployment reduction and poverty eradication (Nwabueze, Okoji, Okon & Briggs, 2014). In line with the aforementioned, there is no doubt that business studies through its integrated subjects (office practice, computer studies, book-keeping, keyboarding and shorthand) provide for the development of skills that can promote self-reliance among students on completion of the junior secondary level.

Chell (2013) defined skill as proficiency in performance that may be enhanced by practice and training. Similarly, Onyerinde and Falana, (2016) described it as the ability to do something well, usually gained through training or experience that is needed. Skill



development is the process of acquiring or gaining effective and ready knowledge in developing ones aptitude and ability in a particular field (Ihebereme, 2010). The author further asserted that skill development through entrepreneurship in Nigeria educational system act as a rehabilitator, re-orientation, motivator and empowerment to students at any level. Employability relates to the ability of being employed. Thus employability skills are those set of skills, abilities, attitudes and characteristics that enhance or increase the chances of an individual being employed or self-employed and also able to sustain the employment. Business studies at the junior secondary level encourage the development of office and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) employability skills. Thereby, offering various career/ employment opportunities to its recipients in industries and commerce and also to be self-reliant (Koko, 2016). Self-reliance is earning a living through one's own effort. Self-reliant individuals self-employed individuals (entrepreneurs) who are determined, optimistic, risk takers and show a lot of commitment to making their dreams become reality. Self-employment is gradually becoming a popular option especially for young school leavers who are unable to secure employment.

Office practice is one of the major components of business studies at the junior secondary level. As such, knowledge in core office management techniques and operations becomes pertinent at this level. The office is often regarded as the live wire of the organization. Thus no organization can function effectively without an office to manage its human and material resources, hence the need for office practice. The office is a service delivery unit of an organization carrying out such services as clerical, secretarial, accounting and research duties (Sannie, 2009) providing important services that can determine the functionality of the organization. It receives, arranges, processes and communicates information. Office skills are essential for the effective functioning in the world of work (Wolugbom, 2017).

Business studies students also require ICT employability skills to function and to meet up with the challenges of the present ICT driven economy (Wokocha, Wolugbom, Appah and Olorunfumi, 2016), characterized by a dynamic technological revolution. The business world has gradually become an increasingly globalised, digital and complex with the traditional method of carrying out business activities being overtaken by the use of information and communication technology (ICT) gadgets. ICT has transformed the world into a place with unlimited business opportunities which individuals can identify and exploit in order to reduce the unemployment challenge in the country (Atueyi, 2016). Exploring these ICT related opportunities requires a broad range of skills that students must be conversant with from this level of education. ICT is a term used to describe technologies that allow an individual to access, store, retrieve, organize, manipulate, process, arrange and



present information through various forms such as computer devices, social media, printer, photocopiers, scanners, mobile technologies, software, e-learning technologies, internet and so on. It is no longer news that the world has become technologically driven and this requires student sat all levels of education to possess relevant skills to function and help address the problem of unemployment through self-employment (entrepreneurship).

Business studies teachers are those who implement the objectives of Business education at the junior secondary level. They are responsible for ensuring that students at this level are equipped with appropriate skills, abilities and knowledge necessary for self-reliance. It is based on this background that this study was carried out to investigate the perception of business teachers on employability skills required for self-reliance by business studies students in public junior secondary schools in Rivers State.

Statement of Problem

The current business studies curriculum takes into cognizance, the need to provide students with the ability and skills to be gainfully employed upon completion of their programme if they are unable to further their education. It is designed to prepare students for entrepreneurship through self-employment and aimed at equipping the students with skills that will make them employable in the world of work (Esene, 2001). Business teachers are therefore expected to be experts in all the outlined subject areas to be able to affect learning. Unfortunately, it has been observed that most school leavers having completed the junior secondary school level and unable to further their education roam the streets in search of means of livelihood because they lack relevant employability skills they ought to have developed in school. It has also been observed that a good number of students who have moved from junior secondary level to senior secondary level are also deficient in these skills.

Purpose of the Study

The study investigated the perception of business teachers on employability skills required for self-reliance by business studies students in public junior secondary schools in Rivers State. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Determine office employability skills required for self-reliance by business students at the junior secondary school level.
2. Determine ICT employability skills required for self-reliance by business students at the junior secondary school level.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What office employability skills are required for self-reliance by business students at the junior secondary school level?



2. What ICT employability skills are required for self-reliance by business students at the junior secondary school level?

Hypotheses

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

1. There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female business teachers on office employability skills required for self-reliance by business students at the junior secondary school level.
2. There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female business teachers on ICT employability skills required for self-reliance by business students at the junior secondary school level.

Method

The Descriptive survey research design was used for the study. This was considered appropriate for this study because it is a valuable tool for assessing opinions. The study was carried out in Rivers State, specifically, public junior secondary schools in Port Harcourt Local Government Area. The area has fifteen public junior secondary schools. The population of the study consisted of 120 business teachers. Because of the small size of the population, the entire population was studied. The instrument used for data collection was a 10 item structured questionnaire titled “Business Teachers' Perception of Students' Employability Skills Questionnaire” (BTPSESQ). The instrument was structured on a 4-point rating scale. The questionnaire items were subjected to face and content validation by two experts in Business Education. A reliability coefficient of 0.70 was obtained using the test-retest method and Pearson Moment Correlation Coefficient. One hundred and twenty copies of questionnaire were administered, however only 96 copies were retrieved and analysed using mean for the research questions and z-test statistics for the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The decision rule was that any mean value of 2.50 and above was considered accepted while mean values below 2.5 were rejected. If z-calculated value was higher than z-critical value reject null hypotheses or otherwise accept if z-calculated is less than z-table value..

Results

Research Question 1

What office employability skills are required for self-reliance by business students at the junior secondary school level?

Table 1: Mean Ratings on office employability skills are required for self-reliance by business students at the junior secondary school level in Rivers State



S/N	Items	Business Studies Teachers				Decision
		Male		Female		
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
1	Ability to manage information effectively	2.52	0.45	2.76	0.86	Accepted
2	Ability to use office equipment and facilities	2.58	0.69	3.09	0.88	Accepted
3	Ability to manage time effectively	2.91	0.99	2.86	0.92	Accepted
4	Ability to organize work	2.68	0.87	2.91	0.99	Accepted
5	Ability to cooperate with other workers	2.86	1.01	2.68	0.87	Accepted

Table 1 reveals that respondents indicated agreement to all office employability skill items as required by business students for self-reliance at the junior secondary school level.

Research Question 2

What ICT employability skills are required for self-reliance by business students at the junior secondary school level?

Table 2: Mean Ratings on ICT employability skills are required for self-reliance by business students at the junior secondary school level in Rivers State

S/N	Items	Business Studies Teachers				Decision
		Male		Female		
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
1	Ability to operate the computer	2.64	0.94	3.04	0.90	Accepted
2	Ability to access and use internet services	2.53	0.85	2.66	0.94	Accepted
3	Ability to produce text documents	2.98	0.90	2.51	0.75	Accepted
4	Ability to create, format, save, retrieve and print document	3.15	0.79	2.64	0.87	Accepted
5	Ability to use ICT related gadgets	2.81	0.94	3.32	0.64	Accepted

The results presented in Table 2 reveals that the respondents indicate that ICT employability skills are required for self-reliance by business students at the junior secondary school level.

Hypothesis 1

There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female business studies teachers on office employability skills required for self-reliance by business students at the junior secondary school level.

Table 3: z-test analysis of mean difference between the perception of male and female business teachers on office employability skills required for self-reliance by business students at the junior secondary school level in Rivers State.

Group	N	Mean	SD	z-cal	Df	z-crit	Decision
Male	36	2.71	0.81	0.77	94	1.96	Accepted
Female	60	2.86	0.90				

Since the calculated z-value of 0.77 is less than the z-critical value of 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance and degree of freedom of 94, the hypothesis is accepted and conclusion made that there is no significant difference in the mean rating of male and female business teachers on office employability skills required for self-reliance by business students at the junior secondary school level.

Hypothesis 2

There is no significant difference in the mean rating of male and female business teachers of on ICT employability skills required for self-reliance by business students at the junior secondary school level.

Table 4: z-test analysis of mean difference between the perception of male and female business teachers on ICT employability skills required for self-reliance by business students at the junior secondary school level in Rivers State.

Group	N	Mean	SD	z-cal	Df	z-crit	Decision
Male	36	2.82	0.88	0.21	94	1.96	Accepted
Female	60	2.89	0.82				

The result in Table 4 show a z-cal value of 0.21 as against a table value of 1.96. Since the calculated value is less than the table value, the null hypothesis is upheld that there is no significant difference in the mean rating of male and female business teachers of on ICT employability skills required for self-reliance by business students at the junior secondary.

Discussion

The findings of the study from research question one affirmed the perception of male and female business teachers on office skills as a requirement for self-reliance. Findings revealed that office skills such as ability to effectively manage information, ability to use office facilities, ability to manage time, ability to organize work among others are essential for self-reliance. This finding confirms the assertion of Oraizowalam (2010) that lack of this skill will result in poor record keeping, lack of initiative, poor communication and business failure while acquisition of these skills will improve human and public relations. more office management and administration. As such developing these



employability skills is very essential for any business enterprise. Koko (2016) also confirmed that office skills are very important for the functionality of any organization.

The study also revealed that views of business teachers' on ICT skills required for self-reliance showed the agreement of respondents to the skills items identified, indicating that skills such as ability to operate computer and ICT tools, ability to create, format, save, retrieve, scan and print documents using word processing tools, ability to use different word processing packaged software applications among others as were required for self-reliance by business students at the junior secondary level. Ineberebor (2006) pointed out that technology has become a vital tool in almost all human endeavours.

The testing of hypotheses 1, 2, 3, 4 as presented in tables 5, 6, 7, 8 revealed no significant differences in the mean ratings of male and female business teachers with z-cal values of 0.77 and 0.21 respectively. Each revealing a z-test calculated values less than the z-test critical value of 1.96. This implies that there was no disparity in the opinion of business studies teachers as regards these skills. This result corroborates the opinion of Ugwuanyi, Ugwu and Ezech (2015) as well as Koko (2016) that business education at all levels provide for the development of skills. This therefore implies that the components of business studies offered at the junior secondary school level provide for the acquisition of employability skills which students can translate into self-employment.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it is concluded that business studies at the junior secondary school level offers lots of employment opportunities that students can explore to achieve self-reliance. Harnessing these opportunities open to business students require the development of relevant office and ICT employability skills. Business teachers are therefore expected to be experts in all components in order to affect learning.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusion of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Students should be exposed to practical office and ICT skills, as well as work related activities in order to ensure the development and acquisition of the identified skills work activities.
2. Students at the completion of junior secondary school level should be encouraged to explore and harness employment opportunities for self-reliance.
3. Instructional delivery methods should incorporate more practical applications for the development of employability skills.
4. The business studies curriculum should be periodically reviewed and re-structured to incorporate the identified employability skills.
5. Conferences, workshops, seminars with its focus on skills acquisition should be constantly organised for students.



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