



EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES FOR CURBING GRADUATE UNEMPLOYMENT THROUGH ADEQUATE SKILLS DEVELOPMENT IN BUSINESS EDUCATION PROGRAMME IN UNIVERSITIES IN SOUTH–EAST NIGERIA

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Abstract

The study was necessitated by the need to curb the increasing level of graduate unemployment and the many associated ills in Nigeria generally and the South-East in particular is caused by lack of employability skills among the graduates. It determined effective strategies for developing skills in word processing and desktop publishing which are major components of the Business Education programme to curb the menace. Two research questions guided the study and two null hypotheses were tested. The study employed survey research design. The entire population of 65 business educators in public universities in the South-East offering the programme was studied without sampling because the size was not too large. A four-point rating scale questionnaire containing 24 items in two sections was used for data collection. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions and determine the homogeneity of the respondents' views while t-test was used to test the hypotheses at .05 level of significance using statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) version 21. Findings of the study revealed that the most effective strategy for developing employability skills in the two vital technology areas are intensive practical and little dose of theory. Furthermore, there was no significant difference between respondents in Federal and State universities on effective strategies for developing adequate skills in word processing and desktop publishing among Business Education students. Based on the findings, the researchers concluded that adoption of the strategies considered effective by experts for developing adequate skills in word processing and desktop publishing is the only way to equip university Business Education graduates to succeed in self-employment and job creation in order to curb graduate unemployment. Consequently, it was recommended among others that all tertiary educational institution lecturers teaching word processing and desktop publishing should adopt the considered most effective strategies by the experts in order to develop adequate skills in students to help them secure and succeed in paid employment or become self-employed and job creators on graduation to curb graduate unemployment.

Keywords: *Effective strategy, curbing, graduate unemployment and Business Education*



Introduction

Graduate' unemployment in Nigeria has reached an alarming rate and has become worrisome to the graduates, parents, government and the general public. Muogbo and John-Akamelu (2018) opined that Nigeria, like most developing countries of the world, is faced with a myriad of problems and realities which include unemployment, poverty, conflicts and diseases. Furthermore, Effiong (2019) averred that the high rate of youth unemployment in Nigeria continues to be a difficult puzzle for government to solve despite much social interaction programmes aimed at increasing job creation for the country's youthful population.

Unemployment occurs when an adult of working age remains idle due to lack of employment opportunities or other conditions including irrelevance as a result of obsolete skills. Graduate unemployment refers to a situation where graduates of tertiary educational institutions like colleges of education, polytechnics, monotechnics and universities who are of working age are unable to find jobs. According to Anyanwuocha (2011), unemployment occurs in the economy if there are people who are capable of working and who are qualified by age, law, custom and other factors to work but cannot find jobs. In the same vein, the International Labour Organization (2012) defined unemployment as the number of economically active population without work including people who have voluntarily left work.

Unemployment can be caused by so many factors. Jacob, Goshi and Jonathan (2019) identified inappropriate school curricular, poor electricity, insecurity and corruption as some of the causes of unemployment in a given society. Unemployment in Nigeria can be attributable to economic recession, economic reform policies, poor educational planning, rapid population growth and inadequate skills acquisition by graduates for self-employment. Unemployment could be structural, seasonal, voluntary, casual, frictional and cyclical. Kimberly (2020) identified three major types of unemployment, namely; cyclical, structural and frictional. Cyclical unemployment occurs during depression or recession and structural unemployment occurs due to changes in the consumption or demand patterns in an economy (Anyanwuocha,2011). On the other hand, frictional unemployment is the type of unemployment that occurs due to the economic situation of a country and exists all the time in every economy. It is inevitable in a developing country and occurs when people change jobs and may perhaps be unemployed for some time.

Prolonged unemployment can be very devastating on graduates. It causes them to suffer financial difficulties which can lead to poverty, hunger, kidnapping, pilfering, suicide and low standard of living. It may also cause the graduates to lose their self-esteem and respect. Effiong (2012) stressed that graduates from universities have a great difficulty in getting established which could be as a result of inadequate acquisition of relevant skills for self-employment. Skills acquisition helps individuals to become self-employed and create employment for others which, in turn leads to reduction in poverty and crime rate. Skill acquisition is the process of training an individual in a particular trade and also the development of a new skill.



Skill acquisition is a specific form of learning. It is the process of training a learner on the manual dexterity involved in performing given functions or tasks until they can expertly perform them. Pilot (2015) affirmed that companies today are searching for people who have many skills as against those who have good paper qualifications. Today's employers prefer skilled job seekers because they can perform many functions effectively and efficiently to contribute to the productivity and success of their organizations due to series of skills they possess. This goes to justify the need to discover effective strategies for equipping university and other tertiary educational institution students with relevant employability skills to help them secure paid employment or become self-employed on graduation to curb graduate unemployment in Nigeria.

Curbing means controlling or limiting something that is not beneficial or wanted. Graduate unemployment is not beneficial or wanted in Nigeria because it is breeding many societal ills and, therefore needs to be objectively curbed, controlled, reduced, limited or completely eradicated through skills acquisition especially in Business Education programme.

Business education is a skill oriented programme directed towards equipping the recipients with relevant skills for success in paid or self-employment. Ekwue, Udemba and Ojuro (2019) defined Business Education as an educational programme that prepares students for entry into and advancement in jobs within business, handle their own business affairs and function intelligently as consumers and citizens in a business economy. Ubulum and Dambo(2016) posited that Business Education is a collaborative programme in which educational and industrial sectors of any economy form partnership thereby preparing the students to adequately fit into both industry and classroom as professional teachers.

The programme develops skills for all aspects of business in students. For instance, a sound Business Education programme must include courses in Accounting Education, Office Education, Marketing Education, Information and Communication Technology and Entrepreneurship studies. The objectives of business education programme differ at different levels of the education system in Nigeria. Generally, the objectives include among others to produce professional teachers that can teach business subjects in secondary schools, engage in professional studies in Business Education and graduates with intellectual understanding of the increasing complexity of the business world.

For the programme to serve its purpose as a veritable tool for skill acquisition for curbing graduate unemployment there is need to adopt effective strategies to adequately prepare the products for world of work with adequate skills acquisition in word processing and desktop publishing. Strategy is a novel for achieving a specific purpose. The effectiveness of a programme is determined by its ability to deliver expected results. In other words, effective strategies are those strategies that will enable students adequately acquire the relevant skills to secure and succeed in paid employment or self-employed and job creation on graduation when implemented. The key areas of focus are word processing and desktop publishing.

Acquisition of relevant skills in word processing and desktop publishing can help to curb unemployment among Business Education graduates if the lecturers adopt effective strategies in teaching the course at the different levels of the programme. Such strategies could be building a functional computer laboratory for students' practical and generally making the teaching more practical than theoretical, students purchasing personal laptop for practice at homes, offering the course from the first to final years in the programme so that students can master all the skills before graduation.



Word processing is the most common and widely used of all the computer applications. It is a process of creating, editing and printing all types of personal and office documents with professional touch. Word processing is an application programme that allows the users to create letters, reports, newsletters, tables and brochures among others. It contains options for document creation and modification such as editing, saving, copying, pasting, moving and deleting text; document formatting such as different font types, styles (bolding, underlining, italicizing) and colours; creating tables and printing document among others. All these make it a fantastic programme for producing all types of text-based personal and office documents accurately, neatly and speedily without stress.

Desktop publishing is the production of printed materials such as newspapers, brochures and magazines using a desk top computer and laser printer. Desktop publishing (DTP) is a product of computer technology which has replaced the conventional method of printing. Dawn (2019) affirmed that desktop publishing use publishing software to create various documents and products such as financial reports, business proposals, books, newspapers, newsletters, tickets and business cards. Furthermore, desktop publishing can be used to format and combine textual and numerical data, photographs, illustrations, charts and other visual elements. The researchers observed that most practicing desktop publishers in Nigeria are self-employed and that they contribute significantly to the nation's economic development. Therefore, business education graduates can key into this occupation if they acquire relevant skills in desktop publishing for self-employment which will drastically reduce the number that join the queue of seekers of paid employment. It is against this background that the researchers focused the strategies for effectively developing relevant skills in the two areas for curbing graduate unemployment.

Statement of the problem

Graduate unemployment has become a global problem with several societal ills. The impact of COVID-19 may likely increase the level of this problem especially in a developing country like Nigeria. Many industries including public and private sectors are threatening to disengage their workers because of the effect of the global lockdown resulting from the pandemic. It is no longer a news that yahoo-business (internet fraud) is now a model in the society. Graduates of tertiary educational institutions like public and private universities without relevant employability skills in the current technology-driven era are under pressure to join other internet fraudsters in order to survive. This is why Effiong(2019) asserted that graduates from universities have difficulty in getting established because most of them are grossly deficient in skills required to secure and succeed in paid or self-employment. This could be due to non adoption of suitable strategies by lecturers to develop relevant skills in popular computer applications in Business Education which is a skill based academic programme in universities and tertiary educational institutions.

This ugly situation is compounding the high level of graduate unemployment in Nigeria as large numbers of university Business Education graduates are seen roaming the streets of urban centres in search of non-existing paid employment, failing employment interviews and unable to go into self-employment contrary to the objectives of the programme. If the situation is not suitably and urgently addressed more of the graduates will join the disturbing queue of unemployed graduates thereby paving way for more societal ills. Obviously the adequacy of skills developed by students in the programme is determined by the suitability of the strategies adopted by the lecturers and supported by the institutions. Where unsuitable strategies are adopted, students' level of skills acquisition in word processing and desktop publishing will remain grossly inadequate thereby defeating



the objectives of the programme and exposing the products to unbearable hardships. Therefore, the problem of this study is that there is lack of empirical data on suitable strategies for developing skills in word processing and desktop publishing among university Business Education students to equip them for success in paid or self-employment on graduation.

Research questions

The following research questions guided the study.

1. What are the effective strategies for developing adequate skills in word processing among university Business Education students in South-East Nigeria to curb graduate unemployment?
2. What are the effective strategies for developing adequate skills in desktop publishing among university Business Education students in South-East Nigeria to curb graduate unemployment?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at .05 level of significance:

- 1.. There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of business educators in Federal and State owned universities in South-Nigeria on strategies for developing adequate skills in desktop publishing among university Business Education students to curb graduate unemployment?
2. Significant difference does not exist between the mean ratings of business educators in Federal and State owned universities in South-East Nigeria on effective strategies for developing adequate skills in desktop publishing among university Business Education students to curb graduates' unemployment?

Method

Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The area was South-East Nigeria covering Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo States. Two research questions guided the study and two null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. Population of the study comprised 65 Business Educators in all public (State and Federal) Universities in the area offering Business Education programme. The entire population was used; therefore, there was no need for sampling. A four-point rating scale questionnaire titled "Strategies for skills acquisition questionnaire (SSAQ)" was used to collect data for the study. The instrument has 26 items in two sections in line with the specific objectives of the study with options of very effective (ME), effective (E), moderately effective (ME), ineffective (IE) . Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions and determine the closeness of the respondents' mean ratings while t-test statistics was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21. Decision on the research questions was based on the mean scores of the items using upper and lower class limits of the mean. Thus, 3.50-4.00(most effective), 2.50-3.49 (effective) 1.50-2.49(moderately effective), 1.00-1.49(ineffective). Similarly, where the calculated t-value is less than the alpha value at 63 degree of freedom, the null hypothesis was rejected but where it is equal to or greater, the null hypothesis was not rejected.



Results

Research question 1: What are the effective strategies for developing adequate skills in word processing among business education students in South-East Nigeria to curb graduate unemployment?

Table 1: Respondents’ mean ratings and standard deviation on strategies for developing adequate skills in word processing among university Business Education students to curb graduate unemployment

S/N	Effective Strategies for developing skills in Word processing	Federal Universities N=46		State Universities N=19		Overall		Dec.
		\bar{X}_1	SD ₁	\bar{X}_2	SD ₂	\bar{X}_G	SD _G	
1	Provision of a functional computer lab by the institution	3.13	0.93	2.79	0.79	3.03	0.90	E
2	Starting word processing in the first year for all students	3.17	0.38	3.32	0.67	3.22	0.48	E
3	Parents/sponsors providing personal laptop for students	3.28	0.50	3.63	0.60	3.38	0.55	E
4	Putting word processing more of practical with a little dose of theory.	3.59	0.58	3.68	0.58	3.62	0.58	E
5	Using drill and practice only as teaching method	2.93	0.33	3.05	0.23	2.97	0.31	E
6	Departments and institutions providing regular power supply	3.02	0.80	2.74	0.65	2.94	0.77	E
7	Students should master keyboarding in the second year	2.93	0.33	3.00	0.58	2.95	0.42	E
8	Industrial training should be compulsorily done in a computer firm	3.33	0.52	3.11	0.46	3.26	0.51	E
9	Making word processing a three credit load from third year	3.07	0.80	2.84	0.69	3.00	0.77	E
10	Making it compulsory for students to type their seminar paper/project in the computer lab	3.54	0.55	3.11	0.46	3.42	0.56	ME
11	Engaging lecturers who	2.98	0.26	2.95	0.40	2.97	0.30	



	can expertly demonstrate word processing skills to students							E
12	Engaging students to typeset work in the business centre for reward	3.11	0.38	3.05	0.23	3.09	0.34	E
13	Rewarding a student that shows proficiency in practical work	2.89	0.90	3.53	0.70	3.08	0.88	E
Grand Mean		3.15	0.56	3.14	0.54	3.15	0.57	E

Table 1 shows that the overall mean ratings of the respondents for all the listed effective strategies range from 2.94 to 3.62 indicating effective.. This means that the respondents to the itemized as the effective strategies for curbing graduates unemployment through skill acquisition in word processing. The overall cluster mean of 3.15 further depicts that the itemized are the effective strategies required. The low cluster standard deviation of 0.57 obtained from data analysis indicates that the respondents have consensus opinion in their responses to the items.

Table2 : Summary of t-test analysis on the mean ratings of respondents from Federal and State universities on the effective strategies for developing adequate skills in word processing among Business Education students to curb graduate unemployment

Variables	N	t-calc	Df	Sig. (2tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Decision
Federal universities	46	.260	63	.796	.18879	.72571	NS
State Universities	19						

Table 3 shows that the t-value at 63 degree of freedom is 0.260 with a significant value of 0.796 which is more than the alpha value of 0.05. This means that there is no significant difference with the regard to the 13 items between the mean ratings of respondents from Federal and State universities on strategies for developing adequate skills in word processing among Business Education students to curb graduates unemployment, therefore, the null hypothesis was not rejected.



Table 3: Respondents' mean ratings and standard deviation on effective strategies for developing adequate skills in desktop publishing among university Business Education students to curb graduate unemployment

/N	Strategies for curbing graduates unemployment through skill acquisition in desktop publishing include;	Business Educators in Fed.Uni. N=46		Business Educators in State Univ. N=19		Overall		Decision
		\bar{X}_1	SD ₁	\bar{X}_2	SD ₂	\bar{X}_G	SD _G	
1	Offering desktop publishing as a course in business education	3.28	0.54	3.16	0.50	3.25	0.53	E
2	Installing desktop publishing software in all the computer system in the Lab	3.57	0.54	3.15	0.50	3.45	0.56	E
3	Lecturers need to adequately possess desktop publishing skills for effective demonstration	3.80	0.50	3.37	0.68	3.68	0.59	ME
4	Organizing seminars and workshops on desktop publishing for students	2.96	0.29	2.89	0.32	2.94	0.30	E
5	Department synergizing with desktop publishers for adequate skill development	2.91	0.81	3.21	0.63	3.00	0.77	E
6	Students compulsorily doing their IT in publishing firm	2.89	0.53	2.95	0.23	2.91	0.46	E
7	Business educators adopting suitable teaching methods in desktop publishing	3.37	0.53	3.34	0.48	3.35	0.51	E
8	Making exams in desktop publishing practical all through	3.07	0.83	3.26	0.65	3.12	0.78	E
9	Providing templates that have information and image for students	3.30	0.51	3.68	0.48	3.42	0.53	E
10	Students producing exercise books to serve as individual supervised project	2.98	0.26	2.95	0.23	2.97	0.25	E
11	Providing students completed work for guidance.	3.13	0.34	3.05	0.40	3.12	0.36	E
Grand Mean		3.21	0.52	3.18	0.46	3.20	0.51	E



The result of data analysis presented in Table 3 depicts that the overall mean rating of the respondents ranges from 2.94 to 3.68 indicating that the itemized are the effective strategies for curbing graduates unemployment through skill acquisition in desktop publishing. The overall cluster mean of 3.20 further shows that the respondents agreed to the itemized. The low cluster standard deviation of 0.51 obtained from data analysis indicates that the respondents have consensus opinion in their responses to the items.

Table 4: Summary of t-test analysis on the mean ratings of federal university business educators and state university business educators on the strategies for curbing graduates unemployment through skill acquisition in desktop publishing

Variables	N	T	Df	Sig. (2tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Decision
Fed. Uni. Business Educators	46	.407	63	.686	.26087	.64174	NS
State University Business Educators	19						

The result of data in Table 4 shows that the t-value at 0.05 level of significant and 63 degree of freedom for the eight items is 0.407 with a significant value of 0.686. Since the significant value of 0.686 is more than the 0.05 level of significant the null hypothesis is not significant. This means that there is no significant difference with the regard to the 11 items on the mean ratings of federal university business educators and state university business educators on the strategies for curbing graduates unemployment through skill acquisition in desktop publishing. Hence the null hypothesis shows no significant difference.

Discussion of findings

Research question 1 Table one revealed that the respondents rated putting word processing more of practical with little those of theory as the most effective strategy for curbing graduate unemployment through adequate skill development in business education. Word processing is a skill oriented course and students need to do constant practice for mastery of skills. Acquiring adequate skills in word processing will empower graduates of university Business Education programme to establish business centers with internet facilities, employ workers and manage them successfully thereby curbing graduate unemployment. This finding agrees with the opinion of Ikechukwu and Najimu cited by Uchenu, Okeke-Okonkwo and Ifi (2019) that acquisition of practical skills relating to occupation in various sectors of economic and social life will improve the standard of living of people and assist in eradicating poverty in the society. Therefore business educators who are experts in word processing should ensure that word processing as a course is loaded with heavy dose of practical.

Furthermore, the findings revealed that university ownership did not significantly influence the respondents' mean ratings on strategies for developing adequate skills in word processing among university Business Education students for curbing graduate unemployment. This implies that all the Business Educators irrespective of institutional



ownership recognize the value of word processing skills for success in paid or self-employment in the current era.

The findings Table three revealed that the most effective strategy for curbing graduates unemployment through skill acquisition in desk top publishing is that business educators need to adequately possess desktop publishing skills for effective demonstration.

Business educators cannot impart the necessary desktop publishing skills if they do not possess them. In line with the finding of the study, Jacci (2020) noted desktop publishing skill is a desirable skill set for office managers, teachers, Wordadministrative assistants, real estate agents and restaurants managers.

The test of hypotheses showed that significant difference did not exist between the mean ratings of business educators in Federal and State Universities on strategies for curbing graduates unemployment through acquisition of skill in word processing and desk top publishing. The reason could be that business education students need practical skills in both word processing and desktop publishing skills for self-employment irrespective of institutional type or ownership.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, the researchers concluded that adoption of the strategies considered effective by experts for developing adequate skills in word processing and desktop publishing is the only way to equip university Business Education graduates to succeed in self-employment and job creation in order to curb graduate unemployment.

Recommendations:

Based on the findings and conclusion of the study, the researchers recommended as follows:

1. Word processing should be more of practical with little theory.
2. Business Educators should adequately possess desktop publishing skills for effective demonstration so as to equip the students with skills for self-employment.

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