



CURRICULUM CONTENT, GENDER, SELF-EFFICACY AND ACQUISITION OF EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS AMONG BUSINESS EDUCATION GRADUATES OF UNIVERSITIES IN CROSS RIVER STATE, NIGERIA

DAVID ASUQUO EDET

Department of Vocational Education
University of Calabar, Nigeria
davidedet304@yahoo.com

Abstract

This paper examined curriculum content, gender, self-efficacy and acquisition of employability skills among business education graduates of universities in Cross River State, Nigeria. To achieve the purpose of this study, two research questions and two corresponding hypotheses were formulated as guide for the study. Literature was reviewed in line with the variables under study. Survey research design was adopted. The population for the study was 987 business education graduates between 2007/2008 and 2014/2015 academic sessions from the University of Calabar (UNICAL) and Cross River University of Technology (CRUTECH). The sample of the study was 200 business education graduates drawn purposively using accidental and snowballing sampling techniques. A validated researcher-made four point scale questionnaire titled 'Curriculum Content, Gender, Self-Efficacy and Acquisition of Employability Skills Questionnaire' (CCGSEAESQ) was used for data collection. The instrument was validated by four research experts. A reliability estimate of .72 to .84 was achieved for the instrument using Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient after a pilot test. The data obtained from the field was converted into values and analyzed using independent t-test statistical technique. All hypotheses were tested at .05 level of significance. Findings revealed among others that male universities graduates exposed to business education curriculum content were significantly different from their female counterparts in their acquisition of employability skills. Based on this, it was recommended that since biologically and genetically, males are distinctively different from the females, business education lecturers should intermittently reduce their pace during lesson delivery and be gender sensitive so as to carry along students with low intelligence quotient taking into cognizance their gender unevenness.

Keywords: Curriculum content, gender, self-efficacy, business education, graduates, employability skills



Introduction

University is said to be an institution of higher learning and one of the citadels where tertiary education is offered. One of the goals of education at this level as the Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 2004) puts it is the development of the individual to be self-reliant and useful member of the society through the acquisition of both physical and intellectual skills. These skills when acquired would make learners employable. Yet, many graduates of Nigerian universities cannot find work leading to an intractable problem of growing joblessness, and raises question as to whether functional education is really the pursuit in universities. This situation possess enormous challenge, and a serious responsibility on the university as an institution in that year in, year out there exist a steady increase in the number of applicants seeking and securing admissions into it with a belief in securing employment after graduation.

Unarguably, universities turn out large chunk of graduates into the labour market annually either to secure employment or provide one. The uncomfortable truth, however, is that universities seem to have failed in their avowed mandate of addressing the future of its graduates. The scenario that typifies this is that those skills that employers seek in employees seem scarcely taught in the universities. Essentially, graduate recruiters expect these recruits to be technically inclined and generally versed in their choice fields because there is a correlation between hiring a graduate and his or her acquisition of employability skills. These skills can be referred to as employability skills or “work readiness”. Simply put, it is the acquisition of skills, knowledge, attitudes and commercial acumen that purports to empower fresh graduates to add productive and informed contributions to the attainment of organizational objectives immediately after employment (Singh & Singh, 2008). Omar, Bakar and Rashid (2012) maintained that these skills are needful not only to secure employment, but also to advance within an entity in a way that one can achieve his or her potential and contribute meaningfully to an entity's strategic direction. The acquisition of these skills in the words of Mike (2014) brings with it such benefits as being self- employed, ability to create diverse job opportunities, and reduction in crime rate.

On the other hand, failure to acquire these skills or poorly acquiring them has over the years made graduates unemployed, and for those seen as employed, they are at best underemployed and paid pittance in comparison with what they would have



deservedly earned. The continuous lack of acquiring these skills made Ekpenyong (1988) to tag the universities products as half- baked and unusable unless they are further trained. Probing the causation of this behemoth further, Adebakin, Ajadi and Subair (2015) traced it to a mismatch between the education and training received from the universities and the expectations of the employers. Munishi (2016) attributed the poor competence of universities graduates on the job to poor educational training at primary and secondary levels, fuelled by many factors including ineffective curriculum.

Whilst in the university, these students are being taught, and one of the prominent programs of study is Business Education. As Aquah (2014) puts it, business education came to limelight and accorded prominence status by the FRN in 1977 when the National Policy on Education was enacted. This program of study aims at equipping the learners with employability skills and knowledge which would embolden them to create, secure, or stay on the job, as well as grow in it. Although this program is offered across all educational levels, the government's purpose in providing it is to prepare students for entry level jobs in occupations not requiring post-secondary training (FRN, 2004). This being true, those who proceed further to acquire university business education training should have a broader, well-equipped, functional and productive know-how of not just becoming employed but employers themselves.

Regrettably, the program has been implemented for more than four decades now, yet university graduates of business education extraction are still stridently plagued with biting unemployment syndrome despite the laudable prospects of this promising aspect of education. Amidst this, universities in Nigeria keep producing too many liberal arts and theoretical business education graduates whose employability potential look doubtful. Those who are employed at all are found to be unskilled, clueless, and incompetent in discharging their assigned duties. The reason for this may be unconnected with the absence of employability skills, instead, the paucity of employability skills acquisition. It is mind worrying, therefore, to witness graduates of a skill laden program like business education joining the band wagon of those christen “unemployed” whereas a well-articulated program of this worth with options in Accounting, Management, Marketing and Office Technology and Management (OTM) holds employment prospects for her graduates in sectors such as but not limited to; education, financial, industrial, manufacturing, distribution,



managerial settings as well as Information and Communication Technology (ICT). In terms of scope, the present paper covers the first three mentioned options except Office Technology and Management (OTM) because the two institutions sampled in this study did not offer it.

Of important, Edet and Udida (2019) reported that the level of employability skills acquisition among universities business education graduates in the three options is significantly low. In truth, many factors could be the bane for this lack or poor acquisition of employability skills among graduates of universities. Included in this list of factors according to Bala (2016) is gender. Gender denotes differences in sex, that is, male and female and how this differences influence the disposition and perception of learners towards the acquisition of employability skills. According to Mukoro (2014), gender is a term that describes social contrition of female and male individuality, and can be viewed as more than biological classification between men and women. It depicts the manner in which those variations whether actual or imagined are cherished, used and dependent upon in grouping women and men to assigned roles and responsibilities. In the words of Jugale (2010), the word 'gender' is considered in describing the functions performed by women and men, and does not only deal with distinctness, that is, how the society perceive feminine and masculine persons, but how the society bestows power on each class of them. To this extent, what is allowed, expected, or valued is determined by this construct-gender. The view of Egunyomi, Fadeyi, Folaranmi and Adelere (2001) is that gender implies feminist and masculinity. In their assertion, what fittingly describes masculinity in Africa for example includes; being the bread winner or head of the family, an attitude of strong vigilant, and being adventurous, ability to refrain from crying or non-display of emotion, and involvement in male games like wrestling and boxing. Whereas, the feministic attributes are care-giving, handling domestic chores, display of emotion and involvement in dancing, believed to be the female games. To explain this further, Omar, Bakar and Rashid (2012) conducted a study on employability skills acquisition among Malaysian Community College Students. The study disclosed that there was no significant difference in the general employability skills of male and female students. However, thinking skills and systems and development skills were two employability skills that seemed to present significant differences. Similarly, Guardian (2013) disclosed no differences in the acquisition of employability skills between male and female students in all the sub-variables of communication, planning and organizing, self- management, decision making,



computer and overall employability skills. Uzoechi (2015) reported on a related survey that female students performed better than their male counterpart in the acquisition of teamwork, problem solving, initiative and enterprise skills, while their male folks trail the blaze in the acquisition of communication, planning and organizing, self-management, decision making, computer and overall employability skills. That study had a semblance of that of Idaka and Uzoechi (2016) who studied gender, age and employability skills acquisition among university students in Imo state, Nigeria. Findings from their study revealed that female students were better than the male students in the acquisition of communication, self-management, planning and organizing, decision making, computer and overall employability skills. Meanwhile, the female students in their study outperformed the male in the acquisition of teamwork, problem solving and initiative and enterprise skills.

Akuegwu and Nwi-ue (2013) on the other hand appraised university student's acquisition of employability skills for global work place in south-south Nigeria. The study buttressed the existence of a significant difference between the male and female students in their acquisition of employability skills. Findings trot out that there was a significant influence of gender on graduating student acquisition of 7 employability skills, whereas in 3 employability skills, graduating students' gender did not present any significant influence. In a more detailed report, the result made bold that male graduating students had higher mean values in their possession of 6 employability skills of communication, ICT, teamwork, planning and organizing, initiative and enterprise and risk management than their female counterparts. The female graduating students on the other hand were found to lead their male folk in terms of possessing problem solving, self-management, decision making and understanding of work place. This finding was not different from that of Akuegwu, Edet, Uchendu and Ekpoh (2011) which explained that male university student acquired myriad of employability skills in higher proportion than the female folks assessing from their superior mean scores in 6 out of the 10 soft skills examined in contrast with the female graduating students' higher mean value in 4 skills. These findings are not in any way shocking, because of the innate existence of diverse biological disparities in human composition as are distinctly implicit in male and female learners, causing some disproportion in school outcomes of the both groupings (Verhoeven, 2000). Such distinct make ups are not just visible in adulthood, but are found in their cradle through teenage age. The plausible debate set out for such variation according to Bassey and Amanso (2017) is that since two



human beings are not likely to be the same in physical and intellectual endowment, it would be a misplaced expectation and conundrum that male graduates of universities who study business education and their female colleagues should un-vary in their acquisition of employability skills.

Another factor that seem to influence the acquisition of employability skills among university graduates is self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is a social cognitive theory gazette by Albert Bandura in 1986. It is reckoned to be among the major theoretically, heuristically and practically useful construct explicated in modern psychology (Betz, Klein & Taylor in Cherian & Jacob, 2013). It describes people's appraisal of their capableness to organize and execute courses of action expected to achieving specific kinds of outcomes (Lent, Brown & Hackett, 1996). Self-efficacy provides the platform for personal achievement, personal upbeat and self-inspired or intrinsic motivation. As it concern the function of self-efficacy beliefs in human performance, Cherian and Jacob (2013) reminisced the assertion of Bandura that people's level of motivation, affective condition and actions are premised principally on their belief than on what is objectively true. This implies that self- efficacy has a direct impact on an individual's thought patterns, as well as on their emotional reactions. Hence, in relation to this present study, it can be inferred that high self-efficacy can most assuredly trigger an improved acquisition of employability skills among business education graduates of universities when they are exposed to the program's curriculum content. Furthermore, it can develop and build in them a healthy self-worth with the potency of increasing their strength, and instilling in them the ideals of perseverance amidst any seeming frustration that may be encountered in the pursuit of their academic achievement. This corroborates the averment of Graham and Weiner (1996) that self-efficacy has been confirmed to be a good metric used in predicting behavioral results especially in psychology and education than in any other academic construct. Consequently, it has been revealed that self-efficacy plays an impeccable role in influencing individual's behavior. This being true, it is most likely that graduates with high self-efficacy will always outwit those who are inefficacious in terms of employability skills acquisition. Numerous studies that associate students that possess high self-efficacy abounds. Robbins, Lauver, Davis, Langlely and Carlstrom (2014) maintained that students with enhanced self-efficacy show an appreciable academic performance. Hoffman and Spaturiu (2008) crystalized that learners with high self-efficacy display improve performance contrary to the lackluster performance of those with low self-efficacy. Conversely, a



few empirical findings revealed that self-efficacy contribute minimally to academic performance as confirmed by Saunders, Davis, William and Williams (2014); Loo and Choy (2013). These authors discovered that self-efficacy has miniature positive effect on academic outcomes.

Reynolds and Weigand (2010) studied the relationship between academic attitudes, psychological attitudes and academic achievement using a sample of 164 undergraduates' first year students. The outcome showed that self-efficacy was not significantly related to academic outcomes. Jeffreys (2008) equally disclosed a startling finding as it concerns the relationship between self-efficacy and academic outcomes of university students. Predicting academic achievement through self-efficacy among the students was not found.

In Taiwan, Tsai, Chuang, Liang and Tsai (2001) quipped that people who exhibit high self-efficacy views daunting tasks as worthwhile challenges as opposed to the perception of others with low self- efficacy who see such or related tasks as dissuasive. Therefore, graduates with low self-efficacy are likely to put up an avoidance behavior towards the acquisition of employability skills. But high self-efficacy graduates may display an encourage approach towards tasks (Ebenehi, Rashi & Bakar, 2016). In the words of Pool and Sewell (2007), if self-efficacy is viewed as a conviction that someone is able in a distinct situation to perform a task, then self-confidence is that innate ability that is presented to the seen world.

In the words of Goleman (1998), people who have high self-efficacy will always present themselves with the presence of mind and self- assurance. Such traits if exhibited by business education graduates of universities when exposed to the program's curriculum content will unwittingly aid them in acquiring the much desired employability skills. Immense bodies of research evidence have roll-up indicating a positive correlation between self-efficacy and outcomes, which acquisition of employability skill may be inclusive. Obingbo (2016) carried out a study on students' characteristics and attitude towards accounting in secondary schools in Calabar education zone of Cross River State, Nigeria. Findings revealed that self-efficacy significantly influenced students' attitude towards accounting in secondary schools in Calabar education zone of Cross River State. It was therefore recommended that accounting teachers should go outside the class assignment and help students enhance and understand the perceptions of themselves as well as their environment as this may shape their academic performance.



So far, it could be deduced that demonstrated self-efficacy can be translated to an increased self-efficacy. And the gender of graduates reveals their sex make-ups, classification and distinctiveness. However, what drove the interest of the researcher into this study was to ascertain whether self-efficacy and the gender of business education graduates can influence them towards the acquisition of employability skills? This forms the problem of this study.

Research Questions

This study sought to answer the following questions:

- 1) To what extent does business education curriculum content influence the acquisition of employability skills among male and female graduates of universities?
- 2) How does business education curriculum content influence the acquisition of employability skills among high and low self-efficacy graduates of universities?

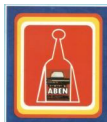
Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses guided the study:

1. Male universities graduates exposed to business education curriculum content are not significantly different from their female folks in their acquisition of employability skills.
2. Universities graduates with high self-efficacy exposed to business education curriculum content are not significantly different from their counterparts with low self-efficacy in their acquisition of employability skills.

Methodology

The study adopted survey research design involving the use of questionnaire. Two research questions and two corresponding hypotheses guided the study. The study area was Cross River State, one of the states in Nigeria's south-south geo-political zone. The population for the study was 987 business education graduates between 2007/2008 and 2014/2015 academic sessions from UNICAL and CRUTECH. Of this number, 200 graduates were purposively drawn as sample using accidental and snowballing techniques. This is shown in Table 1. The response pattern adopted for the questionnaire was a four- point scale of: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD). The questionnaire was validated by four research experts from the two institutions who were requested to vet the instrument base on language, clarity, and relevance. Their comments were considered in



enriching the worth of the instrument. The reliability estimate ranging from .70 to .82 was achieved for the instrument using Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient after a pilot test. This indicated high internal consistency of the instrument. The instrument was administered personally by the researcher with the help of three research assistants. This was done after relevant information about the problem being researched was explained to the respondents. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions, while independent t-test was used to test all the hypotheses at .05 level of significance. The decision rule was that any questionnaire item with a mean score of 3.50 to 4.00 was rated SA/VGI, 2.50 to 3.49 was rated A/GI, 1.5 to 2.49 was rated D/LI, while 1.00 to 1.49 was rated SD/VLI. Similarly, the hypotheses were rejected if the calculated t-value was greater than the critical value. On the other hand, where the calculated value was less than the critical value, the hypotheses were accepted.

Table 1: Population sample of the study

S/N	Institution	Options	Population	Sample
1	UNICAL	Accounting	96	20
		Management	142	29
		Marketing	52	10
2	CRUTECH	Accounting	296	61
		Management	402	82
Total			987	200

Table 2: Gender distribution and sample of the study

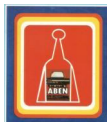
S/N	Gender	Population	Sample
1	Male	396	82
2	Female	591	118
Total		987	200

Results

Research Question 1:

To what extent does business education curriculum content influence the acquisition of employability skills among male and female graduates' of universities?

Table 3: Mean ratings and standard deviation of the influence of business education curriculum content on male and female university graduates' acquisition of employability skills.



S/N	Employability skills	Gender	Mean	SD	Decision
1	Communication	Male	3.51	0.74	Very Great Influence
		Female	2.35	1.86	Low Influence
2.	Problem solving	Male	2.49	1.32	Low Influence
		Female	3.51	0.63	Very Great Influence
3	Numeracy	Male	3.02	0.83	Great Influence
		Female	2.46	1.27	Low Influence
4	Critical thinking	Male	3.08	0.63	Great Influence
		Female	2.39	1.11	Very Low Influence
5	Team work	Male	2.35	1.06	Low Influence
		Female	3.52	0.77	Very Great Influence
6	Decision making	Male	2.64	1.14	Great Influence
		Female	2.05	1.09	Low Influence
7	IT/Computer	Male	1.98	1.66	Very Low Influence
		Female	2.89	1.21	Great Influence
8	Planning & organizing	Male	3.39	0.68	Great Influence
		Female	2.41	1.14	Low Influence
9	Continuous learning	Male	2.76	1.31	Great Influence
		Female	2.25	0.78	Low Influence
10	Self- management	Male	3.52	0.71	Very Great Influence
		Female	2.47	1.05	Low Influence
Grand mean			2.75		

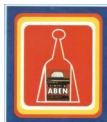
The result of data analysis in Table 3 shows that the mean ratings of the respondents range from 1.98 to 3.52. The result reveals the variableness of the soft skills acquired by male and female business education graduates when exposed to the program's curriculum content. The grand mean rating of 2.75 confirms that the curriculum content has great influence on graduates' acquisition of employability skills.

Hypothesis One

Male universities graduates exposed to business education curriculum content are not significantly different from their female folks in their acquisition of employability skills.

Test for significance was done using independent t-test at .05 level of significance. A summary of the result is presented in Table 4.

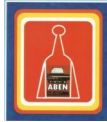
Table 4: Independent t-test analysis of the influence of business education curriculum content on graduates' acquisition of employability skills based on gender



S/N	Employability Skills	Gender	N	Mean	S.D	t- Cal.	t- Cri.	Decision
1	Communication	Male	82	3.51	0.74	2.73	1.96	Significant
		Female	118	2.35	1.86			
2	Problem solving	Male	82	2.49	1.32	2.81	1.96	Significant
		Female	118	3.51	0.63			
3	Numeracy	Male	82	3.02	0.83	3.87	1.96	Significant
		Female	118	2.46	1.27			
4	Critical thinking	Male	82	3.08	0.63	3.28	1.96	Significant
		Female	118	2.39	1.11			
5	Team work	Male	82	2.35	1.06	3.43	1.96	Significant
		Female	118	3.52	0.77			
6	Decision making	Male	82	2.64	1.14	2.04	1.96	Significant
		Female	118	2.05	1.09			
7	IT/Computer	Male	82	1.98	1.66	2.21	1.96	Significant
		Female	118	2.89	1.21			
8	Planning & organizing	Male	82	3.39	0.68	3.51	1.96	Significant
		Female	118	2.41	1.14			
9	Continuous learning	Male	82	2.76	1.31	2.06	1.96	Significant
		Female	118	2.25	0.78			
10	Self-management	Male	82	3.52	0.71	2.31	1.96	Significant
		Female	118	2.47	1.05			

p<.05

Table 4 shows that the independent t-test analysis of the influence of business education curriculum content on the possession of employability skills among graduates of universities with respect to gender yields significant t-values for all the 10 sub-components of employability skills than the critical t-value of 1.96 at .05 probability level. In other words, the null hypothesis which says that male universities graduates exposed to business education curriculum content are not significantly different from their female counterpart in their acquisition of employability skills was rejected. The direction of significance is in favour of males for communication skills, numeracy skills, critical thinking skills, decision making skills, planning and organizing skills, continuous learning and self-management skills. On the other hand, the direction of significance favoured female graduates for problem solving skills, teamwork skills and IT/computer skills. This implies that male universities graduates exposed to business education curriculum contents acquired more employability skills than their female counterparts.



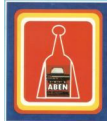
Research Question 2

How does business education curriculum content influence the acquisition of employability skills among high and low self-efficacy graduates' of universities?

Table 5: Mean ratings and standard deviation of the influence of business education curriculum content on acquisition of employability skills among graduates of universities with high and low self-efficacy.

S/N	Employability skills	Self-efficacy	Mean	SD	Decision
1	Communication	High	3.62	0.81	Very Great Influence
		Low	2.39	0.93	Low Influence
2.	Problem solving	High	2.11	1.21	Low Influence
		Low	2.63	1.31	Great Influence
3	Numeracy	High	2.31	0.64	Low Influence
		Low	2.51	0.88	Great Influence
4	Critical thinking	High	3.77	0.86	Very Great Influence
		Low	1.99	1.13	Very Low Influence
5	Team work	High	2.88	0.72	Great Influence
		Low	2.09	0.90	Low Influence
6	Decision making	High	2.30	0.77	Low Influence
		Low	2.68	0.98	Great Influence
7	IT/Computer	High	3.28	0.65	Great Influence
		Low	2.18	0.91	Low Influence
8	Planning & organizing	High	3.66	0.78	Very Great Influence
		Low	2.31	1.31	Low Influence
9	Continuous learning	High	3.55	0.71	Very Great Influence
		Low	2.23	1.21	Low Influence
10	Self- management	High	2.31	1.09	Low Influence
		Low	3.41	0.81	Great Influence
Grand mean			2.71		

The result of data analysis in Table 5 reveals that the mean ratings of the respondents range from 1.99 to 3.77. The result shows the proportion of employability skills acquired by high self-efficacy as well as low self-efficacy business education graduates when exposed to the program's curriculum content. The grand mean rating of 2.71 confirms that the curriculum content has great influence on graduates' acquisition of employability skills.



Hypothesis Two

Universities graduates with high self-efficacy exposed to business education curriculum content are not significantly different from their counterparts with low self-efficacy in their acquisition of employability skills.

Test for significance was done using independent t-test at .05 level of significance. A summary of the result is presented in Table 6.

Table 6: Independent t-test analysis of the influence of business education curriculum content on graduates' acquisition of employability skills based on self-efficacy

S/N	Employability Skills	Self-efficacy	N	Mean	S.D	t- Cal.	t- Cri.	Decision
1	Communication	High	93	3.62	0.81	2.67	1.96	Significant
		Low	107	2.39	0.93			
2	Problem solving	High	93	2.11	1.21	3.60	1.96	Significant
		Low	107	2.63	1.31			
3	Numeracy	High	93	2.31	0.64	1.99	1.96	Significant
		Low	107	2.51	0.88			
4	Critical thinking	High	93	3.77	0.86	3.78	1.96	Significant
		Low	107	1.99	1.13			
5	Team work	High	93	2.88	0.72	2.43	1.96	Significant
		Low	107	2.09	0.90			
6	Decision making	High	93	2.30	0.77	2.88	1.96	Significant
		Low	107	2.68	0.98			
7	IT/Computer	High	93	3.28	0.65	3.37	1.96	Significant
		Low	107	2.18	0.91			
8	Planning & organizing	High	93	3.66	0.78	3.27	1.96	Significant
		Low	107	2.31	1.31			
9	Continuous learning	High	93	3.55	0.71	2.44	1.96	Significant
		Low	107	2.23	1.21			
10	Self-management	High	93	2.31	1.09	2.77	1.96	Significant
		Low	107	3.41	0.81			

$p < .05$

Table 6 shows that the independent t-test analysis of the influence of business education curriculum content on the acquisition of employability skills among graduates of universities with regards to self-efficacy yields significant t-values for all the 10 sub-components of employability skills which were higher than the critical t-value of 1.96 at .05 probability level. To this end, the null hypothesis which says that universities graduates with high self-efficacy exposed to business education



curriculum content are not significantly different from their counterparts with low self-efficacy in their acquisition of employability skills is rejected. The mean score shows significance in favour of high self-efficacy graduates for communication skill, critical thinking skill, teamwork skill, IT/computer skill, planning and organizing skill, and continuous learning skill. On the other hand, the mean scores titled in favour of graduates with low self-efficacy for problem solving skill, numeracy skill, decision making skill and self-management skill. Interpretatively, universities graduates with high self-efficacy exposed to business education curriculum contents acquire more employability skills than their counterparts with low self-efficacy.

Discussion of Findings

Findings regarding hypothesis one revealed that male universities graduates exposed to business education curriculum contents are significantly different from their female folks in their acquisition of employability skills. This finding justifies Akuegwu, Edet, Uchendu and Ekpoh (2011) for noting that differences exist between male and female graduates in their acquisition of employability skills. Conversely, Guardian (2013) disprove this finding by maintaining that there is no difference in the possession of employability skills between male and female students in all the sub-variables of communication, planning and organizing, self-management, decision making, computer and overall employability skills.

Contextually, the finding of this study trot out a mean score of male graduates to be higher than their female counterparts in terms of communication skill, numeracy skill, critical thinking skill, decision making skill, planning and organizing skill, continuous learning skill, and self -management skill. On the other hand, the mean score favoured the female graduates ahead of their male colleagues in terms of problem solving skill, teamwork skill and IT/computer skill. This revelation sustains the finding of Uzoechi (2015) who found that female students were better than their male counterparts in the possession of teamwork skill, problem solving skill and initiative and enterprise skill, whereas their male counterparts were identified to be better than their female folks in terms of acquiring communication skill, planning and organizing skill, self-management skill, decision making skills as well as computer and overall employability skills.

Similar support for the finding of this study stem from Akuegwu and Nwi-ue (2013) who disclosed after a study that male graduating students had superior mean values



than their female folks in possessing generic skills such as; communication, Information and Communication Technology, teamwork, planning and organizing, initiative and enterprise and risk management. In the same vein, the female graduating students were favourably different from their male colleagues' in terms of possessing problem solving, self- management, decision making and understanding of work place than the males.

Additionally, the finding of this study defend Idaka and Uzoechi (2016) who divulged that male students were better than their female folks in the garnering of communication, self-management, planning and organizing, decision making, computer and overall employability skills. The same study maintained that the female students were better than the male in the acquisition of teamwork, problem solving and initiative and enterprise skills.

The influence of business education curriculum content on the acquisition of employability skills among graduates of universities with regards to gender is inconclusive. It could be deduced that since biologically and genetically, marked differences subsist between the males and females, it is matchless, therefore, to expect male and female universities graduates exposed to business education curriculum content to be at par in terms of employability skills acquisition.

The second finding revealed that universities graduates with high self-efficacy exposed to business education curriculum content are significantly different from their colleagues with low self-efficacy in the acquisition of employability skills. This findings preserves the averment of Graham and Weiner (1996) that self-efficacy is a good metric in predicting behavioural results especially in psychology and education as it influence individual's behaviour. This agrees with the perspective of Robbins, Lauver, Davis, Langley and Carlstrom (2014) that students with high self-efficacy show better academic performance. This finding also lays credence to Hoffman and Spaturiu (2008) who crystalized that student with high self-efficacy displays better academic performance contrary to the lackluster performance of those with low self-efficacy.

Conversely, the findings of this study opposed Reynolds and Weigand (2010) who found no nexus between self-efficacy and academic achievement of university students. Relatedly, Jeffreys (2008) could not find self-efficacy as predicting academic achievement among students.



Particularly, the present study disclosed a mean score of graduates with high self-efficacy to be higher than that of their counterparts with low self-efficacy in terms of communication skill, critical thinking skill, teamwork skill, IT/computer skill, planning and organizing as well as continuous learning skill. On the other hand, business education graduates with low self -efficacy had a superior mean score in terms of problem solving skill numeracy skill, decision making skill, and self-management skill. Thus, the findings of this study upholds the view of Tsai, Chuang, Liang and Tsai (2011) who found that people who exhibit superior self-efficacy views daunting assignments as worthwhile challenges as opposed to the frightful perception of others with low self-efficacy who see such tasks as dissuasive. Furthermore, the findings parallel that of Obimgbo (2016) who articulated that self-efficacy significantly influence students' attitude towards accounting in secondary schools.

Conclusion

In line with the finding of this study, it was concluded that male university graduates of Business Education discipline in the three options surveyed were significantly different from their female counterparts in their acquisition of employability skills. This is because while the male graduates acquired communication, numeracy, critical thinking, decision making, planning and organizing, continuous learning and self-management skills; their female folks acquired problem solving, teamwork and IT/computer skills. Also, business education graduates with high self-efficacy acquired communication skill, critical thinking skill, teamwork skill, IT/computer skill, planning and organizing skill as well as continuous learning skill. Whereas, low self-efficacy graduates acquired problem solving skill, numeracy skill, decision-making skill and self-management skill.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were advanced based on the findings of the study:

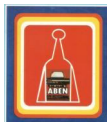
1. Business education lecturers should intermittently reduce their pace during lesson delivery and be gender sensitive so as to carry along students with low intelligent quotient regardless of their gender unevenness considering the fact that biologically and genetically males are distinctively difference from the females.



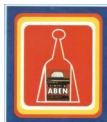
2. Business education lecturers should see their role in the classroom with the students as more than that of presenting academic course contents to that of building positive self-worth and self-esteem of the students. Such mentorship role could create a healthy ambience for the acquisition of employability skills.

References

- Adebakin, A. B., Ajadi, O. T. & Subair, S. T. (2015). Required and possessed universities graduate employability skills: perceptions of the Nigerian employers. *World Journal of Education*, 5 (2), 115 - 121. Doi:10.5430/wje.v5n2p115
- Akuegwu, B. A. & Nwi-ue, F. D. (2013). Appraisal of university students' possession of employability skills for global work place in south-south, Nigeria. *Journal of Education Review*, 6(3), 295-305.
- Akuegwu, B. A., Edet, A. O; Uchendu, C. C. & Ekpoh, U. I. (2011). Assessing teaching readiness of university students in Cross River State, Nigeria; Implication for managing teacher education reforms. *Higher Education Studies*, 1(2), 96-102.
- Aquah, P. A. (2014). Enriching the business education curriculum for relevance in the global workplace. *Global Journal of Human Social Science: G. Linguistic & Education*, 14(7), 31-35.
- Bala, I. (2016). A survey: gender and age affects academic achievement of senior secondary school students. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Development*, 3(12), 132-134.
- Bassey, B. A. & Amanso, O. I. (2017). Assessing students' gender, school type and science process skills acquisition of senior secondary schools students in Calabar education zone, Cross Rivers State. *International Journal of Education and Evaluation*, 3(4), 19-25.
- Cherian, J. & Jacob, J. (2013). Impact of self-efficacy on motivation and performance of employees. *International Journal of Business and Management*, 8 (14), 80-88. Doi: 10.5539/ijbm.v8n14p80
- Ebenichi, A. S., Rashid, A. M. & Baker, A. R. (2016). Predictors of career adaptability skills among higher education students in Nigeria. *International Journal of Research in Vocational Education and Training*, 3 (3), 212-229.



- Ekpenyong, L. E. (1988). Vocational content in the national curriculum for Nigerian secondary schools: How industry can help? *The vocational aspect of education*, 40(106), 57-62
- Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004). *National Policy on Education* (4th ed.) Lagos: NERDC
- Goleman, D. (1998). *Working with emotional intelligence*, Bloomsbury, London
- Graham, S., & Weiner, B. (1996). Theories and principles of motivation. In D. C. Berliner and B. Caiffee (Eds.), *Handbook of educational psychology*, 63-84, New York: Macmillan
- Guardian (2013). World Bank, firm trains 1500 Graduates. Guardian appointments. Thursday August 16, 29
- Hoffman, B., & Spatariu, A. (2008). The influence of self-efficacy and metacognitive prompting on mathematics problem-solving efficacy. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 33, 875-893
- Idaka, I. E. & Uzoechi, L. I. (2016). Gender, age and employability skills acquisition among university students in Imo state, Nigeria. *International Journal of Innovative Education Research*, 4(4), 6-15.
- Jeffreys, M. R. (2008). Predicting non-traditional student retention and achievement. *Nurse Educator*, 23 (1), 42-48
- Jugale, V. B. (2010). *Poverty, globalization and human development*. New Delhi serials publication
- Lent, R. W., Brown, S. D. & Hackett, G. (1996). Career development from a social cognitive perspective. In Brown and L. Brooks (Eds.), *Career Choice and Development* (3rd ed.), 373-422, San Francisco.
- Loo, C. W., & Choy, J. L. F. (2013). Sources of self-efficacy influencing academic performance of engineering students. *American Journal of Educational Research*, 1 (3), 86-92. Doi: 10.12691/education-1-3-4
- Mike, U. (2014). Importance of skill acquisition: Dynamics of skill acquisition: A constraints-led approach.
- Mukoro, A. S. (2014). Gender participation in university education in Nigeria: closing the gap. *International Letters of Social and Humanistic Science*, 34, 53-62.
- Munishi, E. J. (2016). Factors contributing to lack of employability skills among technical and vocational education graduates in Tanzania. *Business Education Journal*, 1 (2), 1-19



- Obingbo, J. I. (2016). Students' characteristics and attitude towards accounting in secondary schools in Calabar Education Zone, Cross River State. An unpublished M.Ed. thesis of the Department of Vocational Education, University of Calabar
- Omar, M. K., Bakar, A. R. & Mat-Rashid, A. (2012). Employability skills acquisition among Malaysian Community College Students. *Journal of Social Sciences*, 8(3), 472-478. [Http://dx.doi.org/10.3844/jssp.2012.472.478](http://dx.doi.org/10.3844/jssp.2012.472.478).
- Pool, L. D. & Sewell, P. (2007). The key to employability: developing a practical model of graduate employability. *Education + Training*, 49 (4), 277-289. Doi: 10.1108/00400910710754435
- Reynolds, A.L. & Weigand, M. J. (2010). The relationships among academic attitude, psychological attitudes, and the first semester academic achievement of first year college students. *Journal of Student Affairs, Research and Practice*, 47 (2), 175-195
- Robbins, S. B., & Lauver, K., Le, H., Davis, S., Langley, R. & Carlstrom, A. (2004). Do psychosocial and study skill factors predict college outcomes? A meta-analysis. *Psychological Bulletin*, 130, 261-288. [Http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.130.2.261](http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.130.2.261)
- Saunders, J., Davis, L., William, T. & Williams, J. H. (2014). Gender differences in self- perceptions and academic outcomes: A study of African American high school students. *Journal of Youth and Adolescents*, 33, 81-90
- Singh, G. K. G. & Singh, S. K. G. (2008). Malaysian graduate's employability skills. *UNITAR - Journal*, 4(1), 14-44.
- Tsai, C. C., Chuang, S. C., Liang, J.C. & Tsai, M. J. (2011). Self-efficacy in internet-based learning environment: A literature review. *Educational Technology and Society*, 14 (4), 222-240
- Uzoечи, L. I. (2015). Assessment of employability skills acquisition among university students in Imo State, Nigeria. An M. Ed. Thesis, University of Calabar.
- Verhoeven, L. (2000). Components of early second language reading and spelling. *Scientific studies*, 4, 313-330