



GLOBAL REQUIREMENTS OF BUSINESS EDUCATION SKILLS ACQUISITION FOR STUDENTS' WORK PERFORMANCE IN NORTH EAST ZONE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

The purpose of the study was to determine the global requirements of Business Education digital skills acquisition for students' work performance in North East Zone, Nigeria. A descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The study was guided by two objectives, two research questions, and two null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. The population for the study was 263, drawn from two Federal Universities in North East Zone (Borno State and Bauchi State). The entire population of 263 was used as sample since it was relatively sizeable for the study. The instrument used for data collection was 40 items questionnaire grouped into two sections based on objectives. The instrument was validated by two experts. Cronbach Alpha method was used to determine the reliability of the instrument which yielded a coefficient reliability of 0.82%. Out of 263 copies of the questionnaires distributed, 243 were properly filled and returned representing 92.40% returned rate. Data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as tables, mean and standard deviation. T-test statistics was used for testing the Null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The mean average score analysis revealed that skill acquisition in business education were highly relevant in meeting the global requirement for work performance of students after graduation from Universities in North East Zone, Nigeria, except shorthand writing and transcription was marked irrelevant. The t-test compared mean result indicated no significant difference in the responses of University of Maiduguri and Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University Bauchi respondent's on both the relevance of skills requirement in business education and ways of improving on them to meet the global work performance in North East Zone, Nigeria. It was therefore, recommended that, though the entire skills in business education were seen as highly relevant only shorthand writing and transcription and typewriting skills, they require improvement.

Keywords: Skills, Skills Acquisition, Business Education, Global Work performance

Introduction

Today higher institutions in Nigeria are facing different challenging to equip students with correct skills, competencies and attitudes required by corporate world. The world of work has changed dramatically; technology is impacting practices and experiences while societies are becoming more global and multicultural. With the rise of globalization, work performance is becoming one of the main goals of education systems. This is due to dual challenge of competing in a world market and rapid technological advancements which necessitates re-design of the work place and requires a behavior and orientation toward work that go beyond step-by-step task performance (Sa'ad and Majid,



2014). In this challenging environment, the role of higher institutions in Nigeria is not only to produce graduates with specific areas of specialization, but more importantly, to develop graduates with skills that match the demand of industries. Higher institutions are under tense pressure from stakeholders, especially industries to equip students with more than just academic theories but adequate skills. Skills have become increasingly important in the globalized world. The shifting demand for skills has necessitated the availability of highly skilled labour (Sa'ad and Majid, 2014).

Skill acquisition is essential for increasing the productivity and sustainability of enterprise and improving working condition and performance of workers. Business education skills are essential, but employers are seeking applicants with more skills. Employers want workers who can continue to learn, adopt, read, and write and computer competency, listen and communicate effectively, think creatively, solve problems independently, manage themselves at work, interact with co-workers, work in terms or groups, handle themselves at work effectively as well as follow supervision. Researchers like Manzo (2009) and Kozma (2009) affirmed that the 21st century skills are instrumental to economic development. According to Suther (n.d.) the 21st century youths will defiantly sell, buy and work for international companies, compete with and manage employees from other countries, collaborate with other people and solve global problems. Therefore, business education students should be prepared to face the challenges that are having ability to compete with people from other countries. Today's highly competitive job market has dramatically changed the rules for career success. Glenn (2007) explained that business education is essential for the preparation of students as knowledge workers in terms of what the students should know and what they should be able to do once they finish their academic programme. Keeping up with the constantly changing work environment means students will have to keep learning new skills and maintain a high level of flexibility in order to adapt to new ideas such as: skills for office machines and equipment, skills in physical marketing, teamwork and leadership skills, entrepreneurship skills, basic business mathematics, manual practical accounting skills amongst many from the classroom environment.

Work performance assesses whether a person perform a job well. It is the assessment of whether an employee has done their work well. It's an individual evaluation one measured based on a single person's effort. Greenberg and Baron (2008) described work performance as an individual level of variables, or something a single person does. This differentiates it from more encompassing constructs such as organizational performance or national performance which are higher variables. Work performance is simply the measurement of an employee's behavior which will impact on organizational performance. Heart Research Association (2015) iterated that, employers want employees who can think on their feet (problem solving) and who can come up with innovative solutions when needed (creative thinking). Employers want employees who have pride on themselves and who have potentials to successful (self-esteem); who have some sense of the skills needed to convince customers, suppliers and co-workers in order to create perfect relationship (interpersonal and negotiation skills); who can work with others to achieve a goal (team work). Employers want employees who knows when and how to get things done, where the organization is heading to and headed for, what they must do to make meaningful contribution towards achieving it (goal setting and attainment); and employees who can assume responsibilities and motivate co-workers when necessary (leadership). According to Knight and York (2002), the identified graduates' skills and attitudes valued by the present-day employers include team working, problem solving, self-management, interpersonal and communication skills, ability to use own initiative to follow instructions and leadership skills. In the same vein as stated above, Carnevals, Anthony and Meltzer (2011) in their study found out that the skills the present-day employers considered necessary for the workplace include communication skills, adaptability skills, interpersonal skills, creative thinking, teamwork, organizational and leadership skills problem solving skills and practical computer application skills.

The accelerating forces of globalization and interdependence have produced a whole new world that makes it imperative that our students receive a world-class education includes global knowledge and skills. One of the global economic factors driving the rise of global worker is skills. A global worker is one who has ability, skill and competence to compete in the international/global



market. Global workforce means preparing students with the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to be successful when working with people from different cultures, regardless of location, British Council (2013) defined global worker as a person who can operate in different countries, cultures and languages. To be a global worker therefore demands the ability and skills to be fluent in at least one other language, such as French, Arabic and or the language of the environment, fluency with e-commerce and the internet and most importantly possess well-versed knowledge on the skills as a business educator. Offili (2017) stated that an employee that want an effective global work performance in the office, should have the skills to use computer, desktop and laptop computers and other electronic devices to complete office tasks. Bhat (2013) has observed that organizations need employees who have the necessary skills to fit in the global work arena and value those individuals who are flexible, adventurous and ready to explore the world and take challenges head on. He listed the following skills that make a professional globally employable as adoptability, ability to learn, language skills, networking skills, creativity skills, functional skills, strong inter-personal skills, willingness to take risk, initiative and curiosity.

It is the statutory duty of the Nigerian higher education to groom the required human capital through relevant manpower training, abilities, attitudes, skills and knowledge. that on graduation young people could have developed additional skills through training and experience that could further enhance their opportunities, capabilities and successes in their life endeavor (Abanyam, 2014). The overall goal of business education is to prepare individual who are well skilled to contribute to the economic development of a nation, thrive in chosen career to perform more effectively in the labour market. The National Policy of Education (NPE, 2016) states that business education is to equip the recipient with skills that will enable them to become better employee/employer, but unfortunately this has not been materialized.

The challenges associated with business education curriculum development in Nigeria, is that the present curriculum in use at all levels in most of our higher institutions are obsolete and not dynamic with the present realities of the changing world of work. Ajisafe, Bolarinwa and Edeh (2015) who posited that inadequacies in the curriculum content of business education, nonrelevance of the course content, poor implementation of the curriculum, time allocation, selection of subjects, current issues and debates and qualification and quality of teachers are issues in skill acquisition in business education. While many developed nations update their curriculum to rhyme with technological changes and acquisition of basic skills, as well as go in line with the global changes which goes with the 21st century trend Nigeria does not respond to such changes.

The above limitations are an indicator that there is less emphasis on skill acquisition in business education programme which resulted in lack of work performance skills as graduate of higher institutions are still roaming the street for white collar jobs, sometimes join kidnapping, Boko-Haram and militancy and all sort of social vices as business. Therefore, if Nigeria wants to compete globally, its business education students need to have competencies and basic skills which should be included into the curriculum such as, communication skill, adaptability skills, inter-personal skills, creative thinking, team work, organization and leadership skills, problem-solving skills and personal computer application skills. As well as the capabilities to be able to work across the national borders manage complex international relationships and understand global aspects of the world of work. Thus, this study is therefore sought to determine the global requirements of business education skills acquisition of students' work performance in North East Zone, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Business education students in tertiary institutions upon graduation are expected to be job creators, but contrary to these expectations, most of them roam the streets for years searching for scarce white-collar jobs. This is because they are inadequately equipped with relevant skills properly due to the fact that business education programmes is not up-to-date with required resources (human and physical) as found in the programme in other part of developed countries. According to the report of National Bureau of Statistics (BNS) (2020), the unemployment rate in Nigeria has increased



from 23.1% in 2019 to 27.1% in the 2nd quarter of 2020 and it was confirmed that it hits 40.1% by the end of 2020. Considering the high unemployment rates among graduates (business education inclusive), it is assumed that the skill acquisition in business education programme in higher tertiary institutions in Nigeria has not been achieved.

A recent development in which Nigerian business education graduates roam the streets looking for scarce white-collar jobs instead of creating their job seems to indicate that all is not well as expected with the standard of the programme. The situation appears more worrisome when viewed against the background that business education was incorporated into the educational systems to equip students with vocational skills for self-employment. It could be deduced from the present scenario that the programme is not meeting its expectations in terms of skill acquisition programme. The need to equip business education students with relevant quality skills acquisition to enable them become self-sufficient and remain globally relevant cannot be overemphasized. Therefore, it is pertinent for this study to determine the global requirements of business education skills acquisition for students' work performance in North East, Nigeria.

Research Questions

- 1 to what extent are the digital skills acquired in business education relevant for global work performance in North East Zone, Nigeria?
- 2 what are the ways of improving on the digital skills acquired for global work performance in North East Zone, Nigeria?

Null hypotheses

The following two hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance.

- 1 There is no significant difference between the mean responses of ATBU and UNIMAID business education students on the relevance of skills acquired in business education in meeting the needs for global work performance in North East Zone, Nigeria
- 2 There is no significant difference between the mean responses of ATBU and UNIMAID business education students on the ways of improving the skills acquired for global work performance in North East Zone, Nigeria

Methodology

The descriptive survey design was adopted for the conduct of the study. According to Mboho, (2010), descriptive survey design deals with the collections of analysis of data for the purpose of describing and interpreting existing conditions, and on-going process of current practice and attitudes. The population of the study consisted of all the 400 level (Part 4) business education students drawn from two Universities in North-East Zone, Nigeria. (University of Maiduguri (UNIMAID) and Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University Bauchi (ATBU)). The population for the study was 263 400 level students of business education from the two Universities. The entire population was used for the study because the population was manageable. Questionnaire was the instrument used for data collection. The research instrument was validated by two experts from the department of Vocational and Technical Education ATBU and from measurement and evaluation unit in the department of Education UNIMAID. The instrument used for data collection was 40 items questionnaire grouped into two sections based on the research questions. Data for the study was collected via questionnaire tagged or titled: Business Education Skills Acquisition questionnaire (BESAQ). Equally, 263 questionnaires copies were distributed to the students in the two Universities and 243 were properly filled and returned. The research instrument contained two sections, each section was assigned four



response options of very highly relevant/strongly agree (VHR 4 points), highly relevant/agree (HR 3 points), moderately relevant/disagree (MR 2 points) and not relevant/strongly disagree (NR 1 points). The two research questions were analyzed using mean and standard deviation and frequency table. The Null hypotheses were tested using t-test at 0.05 level of significance.

A weighted mean of 2.50 and above was considered highly relevant which weighted mean of 2.49 and below was considered irrelevant: for the test of null hypotheses, if (when) the t-cal was less than or equal to the t-crit or table value, the null hypotheses was retained, if the t-cal is greater than the t-crit, the null hypotheses were rejected.

Results

The results of the study were presented according to the research questions and hypotheses that guided the study.

Research questions 1

To what extent are the skills acquired in business education relevant global requirement for students' work performance in North East Zone, Nigeria?

Summary of respondents mean and standard deviation scores on the relevance of skills acquisition in Business Education for global work performance in North East Zone, Nigeria.

S/NO	ITEMS	RESPONSE		
		\bar{x}	SD	REMARK
1	Manual typewriting skills	2.27	1.17	Not Relevant
2	Typesetting skills	3.30	0.68	Highly Relevant
3	Skills in computer application and appreciation	3.54	1.00	Highly Relevant
4	Skills for office machines and equipment operators	3.46	0.68	Highly Relevant
5	Skills in physical marketing operation	2.89	0.86	Highly Relevant
6	Skills in physical marketing advertising	2.69	0.72	Highly Relevant
7	Team work and leadership skills	2.85	0.84	Highly Relevant
8	Entrepreneurship skills	3.13	0.69	Highly Relevant
9	Basic business mathematics	2.74	1.01	Highly Relevant
10	Manual accounting practice skills	2.94	0.85	Highly Relevant
11	Computerized accounting skills	3.14	0.74	Highly Relevant
12	Interpersonal and human relationship skills	3.28	0.62	Highly Relevant
13	Office management skills	3.20	0.74	Highly Relevant
14	Shorthand writing and transaction skills	2.35	1.07	Not Relevant
15	Theoretical skills in buying and selling	2.82	0.86	Highly Relevant
16	Business letter writing skills	2.99	0.46	Highly Relevant
17	Physical delivery of business letter skills	3.55	0.35	Highly Relevant
18	Skills in manual recording of business	3.57	0.47	Highly Relevant
19	Business/commercial laws interpretation skills	2.91	1.01	Highly Relevant
20	Budget preparation skills	2.90	0.54	Highly Relevant
21	Income and expenditure forecasts skills	2.92	0.47	Highly Relevant
22	Cash flow statement preparation and monitoring skills	2.72	0.76	Highly Relevant
23	Financial recording and document skills	2.68	0.86	Highly Relevant
24	Debt tracing and recovery collection techniques skills	2.47	1.06	Not Relevant
25	Business information interpretation skills	2.88	0.76	Highly Relevant
26	Decision making skills	2.93	0.39	Highly Relevant
Weighted Average		2.94	0.75	Highly Relevant

X = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation; N = Number of Respondents; HR = Highly Relevant

The results of data analysis presented in table 1 show that, the average mean rating of the respondents for the twenty-six items was 2.94 with standard deviation 0.75 which is highly relevant with item 4 had the highest average mean of 3.46 while the least average mean was items 1 and 14



having 2.27 and 2.35 respectively. These indicate that skills for office machine and equipment operators were highly relevant for global work performance of students after graduation from the university, while items 1 and 14 were irrelevant in global work performance. The overall standard deviation of 0.75 shows that, the respondents have similar opinions with all the items. This signifies that most of the skills investigated are highly relevant which were well taught in the universities, it will meet the global work performance of students after graduation.

Research Question 2:

what are the ways of improving on the skills acquired in business education meet the demand of their work performance in North East Zone, Nigeria?

Summary of respondents mean and standard deviation scores on ways of improving skills acquisition in Business Education for global work performance in North East Zone, Nigeria.

S/NO	ITEMS	RESPONSE		
		\bar{x}	SD	REMARK
27	Replacement of manual typewriter to digital computer skills	3.17	0.93	Highly Relevant
29	Teaching accounting skills and technology application in today organization	3.16	0.89	Highly Relevant
30	Teaching marketing with digital technology beyond physical environment	2.85	0.93	Highly Relevant
31	Teaching entrepreneurship skills and development in real life environment	3.00	0.29	Highly Relevant
32	Teaching advance mathematics/statistical application in business	3.04	0.94	Highly Relevant
33	Teaching accounting courses with accounting application packages (software)	2.87	0.76	Highly Relevant
34	Teaching advertisement with online digital technology	2.97	0.80	Highly Relevant
35	Teaching both manual and online skills in office management and technology	2.77	0.1s3	Highly Relevant
36	Replacement of pitman shorthand with ICT audio-visual devices	2.76	0.81	Highly Relevant
37	Compulsory teaching and application of online marketing in classroom situation	2.83	0.76	Highly Relevant
38	Teaching the use of business emails and websites to receive or deliver business correspondences	2.80	0.75	Highly Relevant
39	Teaching recording of business transactions using computer software and application	2.89	0.48	Highly Relevant
40	Teaching the use of debt recovering software to track debtors	2.97	0.30	Highly Relevant
Weighted Average		2.75	0.74	Highly Relevant

X = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation; N = Number of Respondents; HR = Highly Relevant

The result presented in table 2 depicts that the average mean rating of the respondents was 2.75 with standard deviation of 0.74 for the 14 items which is highly relevant. Showing that item 28 had the highest mean score with 3.18 followed by item 35 having average mean score of 3.17 closely to each other. The least mean score was items 27 and 36, having average means of 2.77 and 2.76 closely to each other. However, items 27 and 36 had the least average mean indicating that manual typewriting skills should be replace with digital computer typing skills to improve student dexterity. This indicated that all the respondents agreed on all the fourteen item statements as ways of improving on the skills



acquire in business education to meet global work performance of students after graduation in North East Zone, Nigeria.

Ho₁: Summary of independent sample t-test of the differences between mean ratings of ATBU and UNIMAID students of Business education on the extent of relevance of skills acquired for global work performance in North East Zone Nigeria.

Group	N	\bar{x}	SD	Df	t-cal	t-critq	Decision
ATBU	107	2.94	0.78	241	2.319	1.972	Ho ₁ Rejected
UNIMAID	136	2.71	0.75				

Table 3 shows that t-cal is 2.319 and t-critq value is 1.972 at 0.05 level of significance and the degree of freedom is 241. Since the t-cal is greater than the t-critq, the null hypothesis that stated thus: There is no significant difference between responses of students of ATBU and UNIMAID on the relevance of skills acquired in business education for global work performance is rejected.

Ho₂: Summary of independent sample t-test of the differences between mean ratings of ATBU and UNIMAID students of Business education on the ways of improving the skills acquired for work performance in North East Zone, Nigeria.

Group	N	\bar{x}	SD	Df	t-cal	t-critq	Decision
ATBU	107	2.75	0.74	241	2.0702	1.972	Ho ₂ Rejected
UNIMAID	136	2.97	0.75				

Table 4 showed that t-cal value is 2.0702 and t-critq value is 1.972 at 0.05 level of significance. Since the t-cal is greater than t-critq, the null hypothesis that stated thus: There is no significant difference in the mean rating of business education students in ATBU and UNIMAID on the ways of improving the skills acquired for work performance in North East Zone, Nigeria is hereby rejected.

Discussion of Findings

The research was carried out to determine the global requirements of business education skills acquisition for students' global work performance in north east zone, Nigeria. The findings from table 1 showed that business education skills are highly relevant for successful global work performance in North East Zone, Nigeria. This revealed from the table that items which had average mean of less than 2.50 require improvement, in order to meet the global work performance of students. Items 36 had the least average mean scores of 2.76 indicating that, the skills of ICT is highly relevant to replace it with the skills of shorthand in meeting global work performance of students after graduation. The result of the study agreed with the findings of Offili (2017) who stated that an employee that want an effective global work performance in the office, should have the skills to use computer, desktop and laptop computers and other electronic devices to complete office tasks.



The grand standard deviation is 0.75 which implies that the opinions of the respondents were closely to each other. This finding revealed that there is need to improve on the training of business education students in skills acquisition to be able to compete with the changing of career success. This finding is in consonance with the findings and recommendations of Bhat (2013) who state that organizations need employees who have the necessary skills to fit in the global work arena and value those individuals who are flexible, adventurous and ready to explore the world and take challenges head on. He listed the following skills that make a professional globally employable as adoptability, ability to learn, language skills, networking skills, creativity skills, functional skills, strong inter-personal skills, willingness to take risk, initiative and curiosity.

The result of hypothesis 1 indicated that there is no significance difference in the average mean of business education students in ATBU and UNIMAID. However, the response of the students showed that many problems hinder business education students from equipping with relevant skills. The implication lays on the fact that the two universities vary in their format of learning and in their curriculum of instruction. It is either one of the universities is well guided by the minimum standard curriculum of business education and followed the format according to NUC and acquired more relevant skills than the other. This finding is in agreement with the work of Ajisafe, Bolarinwa and Edeh (2015) who posited that inadequacies in the curriculum content of business education, non-relevance of the course content, poor implementation of the curriculum, time allocation, selection of subjects, current issues and debates and qualification and quality of teachers are issues in skill acquisition in business education. The challenges associated with business education curriculum development in Nigeria, is that the present curriculum in use at all levels in most of our higher institutions are obsolete and not dynamic with the present realities of the changing world of work. While many developed nations update their curriculum to rhyme with technological changes and acquisition of basic skills, as well as go in line with the global changes which goes with the 21st century trend Nigeria does not respond to such changes.

The result from table 2 revealed the ways of improving skills acquired in Business education to meet the global work performance of students in North East Zone, Nigeria. It was found that teaching computer application/technology skills in business had the highest average mean of 3.18 and standard deviation of 0.86 closely followed to replacement of manual typewriter to digital computer skills to improve the standard of student typing dexterity, as well as teaching accounting skills and technology application in today organization with average mean of 3.17, and 3.16 each. It was revealed that the respondents agreed that all the items are helpful in improving the skills acquired in business education to meet the global work performance in North East Zone. This is in agreement with the findings of Sa'ad and Majid (2014) and Manzo (2019) who stated that, the world of work has change dramatically; technology is impacting practices and experiences while societies are becoming more global and multicultural. With the rise of globalization, work performance is becoming one of the main goals of education systems. This is due to dual challenge of competing in a world market and rapid technological advancements which necessitates red-design of the work place and requires a behavior and orientation toward work that go beyond step-by-step task performance. Also, a number of developing nations have planned programmes to help teachers and students become proficient in using computers and other information and communication technology (ICT).



Conclusion

The study determines the relevant skills required of business education students for work performance in global market in North-east zone, Nigeria for work performance in the office, as the skills to use computer, desktop and laptop computers and other electronic devices to complete office tasks. Others are ability to learn, language skills, networking skills, creativity skills, functional skills, strong inter-personal skills, willingness to take risk, initiative and curiosity. This were identified that business education skills was highly relevant for preparing students for global work performance in North east zone, Nigeria. Therefore, this implies that for students to perform credibly in global work performance, their skills acquisition should not be taken lightly. In order words student who will seek for employment in global world need to acquire among other things the enumerated skills as found by the study.

Recommendations

Based on the finding of the study, the following recommendations were made:

- 1 Though the entire skills in business education were seen as highly relevant, except shorthand writing and transcription skills and manual typewriting skills that had the least average mean performances that require improvement or rather the NUC minimum curriculum standard of business education should replace manual typewriting skills with digital computer skills in the universities and shorthand skills and transcription should be replace with ICT audio visual devices.
- 2 Training in business education programme should be more on skills in computer application and appreciation and should be practically oriented rather than theoretically based. These will enable them to effectively perform well on practical in working environment which meet with the 21st century global work requirement especially in North East Zone Nigeria. Training in the use of office machines and equipment operation should b intensify by giving attention in training and retraining of students to improve their work performance in various organizations that they might find themselves.
- 3 Business education programme should have a harmonized minimum standard curriculum to be redesign by NUC in order for the students to have the same skill acquisition format of learning in all Nigerian Universities where the course is being taught. The curriculum must be upgraded constantly to reflect the current realities of an automated working environment. In order words, business education programme should constantly evaluate the curriculum so that the programme can successfully respond to the changes of the 21st century and emerging global issues.



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