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DETERMINATION OF MANAGEMENT SKILLS REQUIRED BY BUSINESS EDUCATION STUDENTS IN COLLEGES OF EDUCATION FOR EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES IN BUSINESS SECTOR IN NORTH-EAST, NIGERIA

By

Abubakar Hussaini Usman
Surumbai Integrated Consultancy
abubakarhussaini7834@gmail.com

Babangida Haruna
Department of Vocational Education
Modibbo Adama University, Yola, Nigeria
haruna.babangida@mau.edu.ng

Abstract

This study determined the management skills required by Business Education students in Colleges of Education for employment opportunities in the business sector in North-East Nigeria. A descriptive survey research design was adopted. The study involved 247 respondents comprising 118 Business Education lecturers and 129 industry managers drawn from three Federal Colleges of Education and selected industries in North-East Nigeria. A census sampling technique was used. Data were collected using validated structured questionnaires with reliability coefficients above 0.70. Mean statistics were used to answer the research question, while an independent t-test was employed to test the null hypothesis at the 0.05 level of significance. The Borich Discrepancy Model was used to determine the gap between management skills possessed by students and those required by employers.The findings revealed that NCE Business Education students possessed management skills to a high extent, while industry managers rated the management skills required for employment opportunities at a moderate extent. The study further revealed a significant difference between the mean ratings of lecturers and industry managers on the management skills required for employment opportunities in the business sector. The study concluded that management skills are essential employability competencies for Business Education students; however, greater practical exposure is needed to align students' competencies with workplace expectations. It was recommended that Colleges of Education strengthen internship, industrial attachment, and workplace-based learning programmes to enhance graduates' employability.

Keywords: Management Skills, Business Education, Employment Opportunities, Business Sector, Employability.

Introduction

Education is universally acknowledged as a fundamental instrument for national development and human capital formation. In the twenty-first century, the role of education extends beyond literacy and numeracy to equipping individuals with relevant skills, knowledge, values, and attitudes that enable them to contribute meaningfully to society and compete favourably in the global economy (World Bank, 2020). In Nigeria, education is expected to play a central role in addressing critical challenges such as unemployment, poverty, insecurity, and underdevelopment. The Federal Republic of Nigeria (2019), through the National Policy on Education, emphasizes that education should serve as an instrument for self-reliance, economic empowerment, national integration, and employment generation. Achieving these goals requires educational institutions to equip students with the skills needed in the world of work, particularly in the business sector.

Skills are abilities and expertise that enable individuals to perform tasks and activities competently (Umeano & Ifi, 2019). They are developed through training, practice, and experience. The acquisition of skills is essential because the employment of competent and skilled individuals contributes significantly to productivity and organizational effectiveness (Ogungboyega, 2019). Nigeria can achieve sustainable development when graduates acquire relevant competencies that enable them to secure gainful employment or establish successful enterprises (Jubril, 2019). Among such competencies, management skills are increasingly recognized as essential for effective performance in contemporary business organizations.

Management skills refer to the competencies required to plan, organize, direct, coordinate, supervise, and control organizational resources in order to achieve predetermined goals effectively and efficiently. Irrespective of their area of specialization, Business Education graduates are expected to possess management skills such as the ability to plan and organize business activities, establish and manage small and medium-scale enterprises, source funds for business operations, identify business opportunities, register businesses, manage risks, and effectively coordinate human and material resources (Onwuka & Okeke, 2020). In modern business organizations, effective management promotes operational efficiency, enhances employee motivation, and supports long-term organizational success (Okonkwo & Ude, 2018). Furthermore, Business Education graduates are expected to demonstrate competencies in decision-making, problem-solving, leadership, communication, and resource management, which are critical for advancement into managerial positions (Akinola & Odumosu, 2020).

Employment opportunities refer to the availability of jobs or positions within organizations, industries, or geographical locations where qualified individuals can apply their knowledge and skills (Matsumoto, 2017). The availability of such opportunities is influenced by factors including economic conditions, industry growth, technological advancement, organizational needs, and workforce competencies (Baba, 2018). In today's highly competitive labour market, employers increasingly seek graduates who possess not only academic qualifications but also practical management competencies that enable them to contribute effectively to organizational performance.

Business Education, as a specialized component of vocational and technical education, is designed to produce individuals who are academically sound and practically equipped with the competencies required for gainful employment and self-employment (Ifeoma & Olubunmi, 2021). The curriculum is intended to equip students with relevant skills and competencies that prepare them for employment in business organizations as well as entrepreneurial ventures (Ali & Rilwan, 2023). Consequently, Business Education serves as a vehicle for preparing students to occupy various positions in both public and private sector organizations while also empowering them to become successful entrepreneurs (Ezeani & Okwuolise, 2018). Central to this preparation is the development of management skills that enable graduates to function effectively in dynamic business environments.

Despite the significance of Business Education in preparing employable graduates, concerns persist regarding the employability of Business Education graduates in Nigeria, particularly those from Colleges of Education. Employers have consistently expressed dissatisfaction with the gap between the competencies required in the workplace and the skills possessed by graduates (Adamu & Usman, 2021). Studies have shown that many graduates lack adequate practical and employability-related management skills required for effective job performance (Okoro & Nwajiuba, 2019; Ismaila & Zakari, 2020). Similarly, Nwajiuba et al. (2020) and Okolie et al. (2020) reported a mismatch between the knowledge acquired in higher institutions and the skills demanded by the labour market. This mismatch has contributed to the increasing rate of unemployment and underemployment among graduates.

The situation appears more challenging in North-East Nigeria, where socio-economic and security challenges have adversely affected educational development and workforce preparation (Yusuf & Ibrahim, 2021). Colleges of Education in the region face challenges such as inadequate instructional facilities, insufficient exposure of students to real business environments, weak industry-academic collaboration, and limited opportunities for practical skill acquisition (Umar & Danjuma, 2020; Mohammed & Bala, 2021). These challenges may hinder the development of essential management competencies required by Business Education students for successful employment in the business sector.

Given the dynamic nature of contemporary business organizations and the increasing demand for competent personnel capable of planning, organizing, leading, and controlling organizational activities, there is a need to determine the specific management skills required by Business Education students for employment opportunities in the business sector. Such information will provide valuable insights for curriculum planners, educators, policymakers, and employers in strengthening Business Education programmes and enhancing graduate employability. It is against this background that this study seeks to determine the management skills required by Business Education students in Colleges of Education for employment opportunities in the business sector in North-East, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Youth unemployment remains a major socio-economic challenge in Nigeria, with many Business Education graduates struggling to secure gainful employment due to deficiencies in the management skills required by employers (National Bureau of Statistics, 2021; Olawale & Babalola, 2021). Contemporary business organizations increasingly demand graduates who possess competencies such as planning, organizing, leadership, decision-making, communication, supervision, problem-solving, and resource management for effective workplace performance.However, evidence indicates that many Business Education graduates lack adequate practical exposure and managerial competencies needed to function effectively in the workplace (Ogunyemi & Fakolujo, 2020). Employers have also expressed dissatisfaction with graduates' abilities in leadership, strategic planning, team coordination, and decision-making (Adedokun & Dada, 2020; Akuegwu & Nwi-ue, 2023). This problem is further aggravated by curriculum deficiencies, inadequate facilities, obsolete instructional resources, weak industry collaboration, and limited opportunities for practical skill acquisition in Colleges of Education (Onwuka & Okeke, 2020; Lawal & Arogundade, 2021; Osagie & Egharevba, 2020).

The challenge is more pronounced in North-East Nigeria, where additional socio-economic and developmental constraints affect the acquisition of employability skills. Consequently, many graduates encounter difficulties in accessing employment opportunities, leading to unemployment, underemployment, and reduced productivity in the business sector.Despite the recognized importance of management skills for employment success, there is limited empirical evidence on the specific management skills required by Business Education students in Colleges of Education for employment opportunities in the business sector in North-East Nigeria. This gap in knowledge necessitated the present study.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on the Borich Discrepancy Model developed by Gary D. Borich (1970). The model is based on the assumption that a need exists whenever there is a gap between the current level of competence possessed by individuals and the level of competence required for effective performance. It is widely used in educational and workforce studies to identify skill deficiencies and determine areas requiring improvement.The central principle of the model is discrepancy analysis, which involves comparing existing competencies with expected competencies. In this study, the model is used to determine the gap between the management skills possessed by Business Education students and the management skills required by employers in the business sector. A discrepancy indicates that students need further development in those skills to meet labour market expectations.

The model also emphasizes dual assessment, whereby current competencies and required competencies are measured separately. Accordingly, lecturers assess the management skills possessed by Business Education students, while industry managers assess the management skills required for employment in the business sector. The differences between the mean ratings of both groups are used to identify areas of need.

The Borich Discrepancy Model is relevant to this study because it provides a systematic framework for determining the management skills required by Business Education students for employment opportunities in the business sector. The model enables the identification of skill gaps that can guide curriculum improvement, training programmes, and policy interventions aimed at enhancing the employability of Business Education graduates in North-East Nigeria.

Empirical Review

Several empirical studies have examined the skills required by Business Education students for employability and self-reliance. Nkemdilim and Nwaru (2024) found that accounting skills such as stocktaking and profit-and-loss account preparation significantly relate to job performance among Business Education students. Similarly, Iliyasu and Daramola (2023) identified managerial, word-processing, and entrepreneurial skills as essential for self-employment among Business Education students in Colleges of Education.Studies by Umoru and Oluwalola (2022) and Ore (2022) emphasized the importance of quality assurance mechanisms, curriculum relevance, and workplace integration in promoting employability skills among Business Education students. Their findings revealed that existing curricula often fail to adequately equip students with the practical and soft skills required by employers.

Okeke-Ezeanyanwu and Chinonye (2021) highlighted digital literacy and e-portfolio skills as effective strategies for enhancing employability in the digital era. Likewise, Ezenwafor and Okolo (2020) reported that Office Technology and Management students possessed only moderate levels of word-processing and database management competencies, suggesting the need for improved practical training and technological resources.Furthermore, Aina et al. (2020), Olawoyin (2020), and Falobi (2019) established that entrepreneurial, communication, financial management, self-motivation, time management, marketing, and information technology skills are critical for graduate employability and self-reliance. However, these studies also identified challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, insufficient funding, poor industry collaboration, and curriculum deficiencies as barriers to effective skills acquisition.

Although the reviewed studies provide valuable insights into accounting, entrepreneurial, employability, and technological skills required by Business Education students, most of them focused on broad employability competencies, entrepreneurial skills, or specific skill areas such as accounting and word processing. Few studies specifically investigated the management skills required by Business Education students for employment opportunities in the business sector, particularly in Colleges of Education in North-East Nigeria. This gap necessitated the present study, which seeks to determine the

management skills required by Business Education students in Colleges of Education for employment opportunities in the business sector in North-East, Nigeria. Therefore, base on the review of the prior studies above, the following null hypothesis was developed and tested at 0.05 level of significance:

H_0: There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of lecturers and industry managers on the management skills required by Business Education students in Colleges of Education for employment opportunities in the business sector in North-East, Nigeria.

Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The research was conducted in North-East Nigeria, covering three Federal Colleges of EducationFederal College of Education (Technical), Gombe, Federal College of Education (Technical), Potiskum, and Federal College of Education, Gashuaas well as selected industries including Ashaka Cement Plc, Hara Foam Ltd, Adama Beverages Ltd, and Bajabure Industrial Company. The population comprised 247 respondents, consisting of 118 Business Education lecturers and 129 industry managers, and a census sampling technique was adopted to include all respondents due to the manageable population size. Data were collected using two structured questionnaires on a four-point Likert scale designed to assess the skills possessed by students and the skills required by employers. The instruments were validated by experts in Business Education and their reliability was established through Cronbach Alpha, yielding coefficients above 0.70. Data collection was carried out with the assistance of trained research assistants who distributed and retrieved the questionnaires within three days. Data analysis involved the use of mean statistics to answer research questions and independent t-test to test the hypotheses at a 0.05 level of significance using IBM SPSS Statistics (version 23). In addition, the Borich Discrepancy Model was employed to determine the gap between the skills possessed by NCE Business Education students and those required by employers by computing the mean difference between the two sets of responses. This approach enabled the identification of skill gaps relevant to improving employability in the business sector.

Data Analyses and Interpretation of Results

Research Question 4: To what extent does Business Education students of colleges of education required Management skills for employment opportunities in business sectors in North-east, Nigeria?

Table 1: Determination of Management skills required by Business Education students for employment opportunities in business sectors in North-east, Nigeria

S/N	Items	$\bar{X}_p$	$\bar{X}_r$	NG $(\bar{X}_p - \bar{X}_r)$	Remark
1	The extent at which NCE Business Education students possess the required planning skills for business operations for employment opportunities in business sector	3.78	3.23	0.55	Not Required
2	The extent at which NCE Business Education students possess the required understanding of organizational structures for employment opportunities in business sector	3.42	2.78	0.64	Not Required
3	The extent at which NCE Business Education students possess the required skills to delegate tasks effectively for employment opportunities in business sector	3.47	3.13	0.34	Not Required
4	The extent at which NCE Business Education students possess the required decision-making competence for employment opportunities in business sector	3.43	2.43	1.00	Not Required
5	The extent at which NCE Business Education students possess the required communication skills	3.88	2.64	1.23	Not Required

	for management roles for employment opportunities in business sector				
6	The extent at which NCE Business Education students possess the required leadership abilities for employment opportunities in business sector	3.52	2.92	0.60	Not Required
7	The extent at which NCE Business Education students possess the required team coordination skills for employment opportunities in business sector	3.53	3.08	0.45	Not Required
8	The extent at which NCE Business Education students possess the required skills to manage time effectively for employment opportunities in business sector	3.71	3.07	0.64	Not Required
9	The extent at which NCE Business Education students possess the required skills in human resource management for employment opportunities in business sector	3.62	3.35	0.28	Not Required
10	The extent at which NCE Business Education students possess the required knowledge of office procedures for employment opportunities in business sector	3.28	3.14	0.15	Not Required
11	The extent at which NCE Business Education students possess the required performance appraisal skills for employment opportunities in business sector	3.45	3.13	0.33	Not Required
12	The extent at which NCE Business Education students possess the required skills for goal setting and tracking for employment opportunities in business sector	3.60	2.92	0.68	Not Required
13	The extent at which NCE Business Education students possess the required record management skills for employment opportunities in business sector	3.66	2.95	0.71	Not Required
14	The extent at which NCE Business Education students possess the required understanding of resource allocation strategies for employment opportunities in business sector	3.85	2.85	1.00	Not Required
15	The extent at which NCE Business Education students possess the required project management skills for employment opportunities in business sector	3.60	2.95	0.65	Not Required
16	The extent at which NCE Business Education students possess the required skills to supervise subordinates for employment opportunities in business sector	3.83	2.86	0.97	Not Required
17	The extent at which NCE Business Education students possess the required crisis management skills for employment opportunities in business sector	3.46	3.00	0.46	Not Required
	GRAND MEAN	**3.59**	**2.97**	**0.63**	**Not Required**

Key:

$\bar{X}_p$= Mean score for skills possessed

$\bar{X}_r$ = Mean score for skills required

NG = Need Gap

Table 1 presents the analysis of management skills required by NCE Business Education students for employment opportunities in business sectors in North-East Nigeria. The findings indicate that the students' competencies in management generally exceed the expectations of employers. The grand mean of skills possessed by the students ($\bar{X}_p = 3.59$) was higher than the mean of skills required by the business sector ($\bar{X}_r = 2.97$), with an average positive need gap of 0.63. This suggests that no management skill is critically deficient. Certain skills, such as communication skills for management roles (need gap = 1.23), decision-making competence (1.00), understanding of resource allocation strategies (1.00), and supervising subordinates (0.97), show notable positive gaps, indicating that students are more competent than required in these areas. Other skills, including knowledge of office procedures (0.15) and skills in human resource management (0.28), revealed minimal gaps, suggesting that students possess these skills at levels closely aligned with industry requirements. Overall, the results in Table 4 suggest that NCE Business Education students in North-East Nigeria are adequately equipped with management skills for employment in the business sector, demonstrating that the current curriculum and training effectively meet industry expectations.

Table 2:*H_{04}*.There is no significant difference in the mean response of lecturers and industry managers on level of management skills required by business education student of colleges of education for employment opportunities inbusiness sectors in North-East, Nigeria.

GROUPS	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	df	t	P value
LECTURERS	106	61.10	8.377	222	9.559	.000
INDUSTRY MANAGERS	118	50.42	8.331			

Table 2 presents the results of the t-test comparing the mean ratings of lecturers and industry managers on the extent to which NCE Business Education students possess the required management skills for employment opportunities in the business sector. The analysis revealed that lecturers reported a higher mean score (M = 61.10, SD = 8.377) for skills possessed by students, while industry managers reported a lower mean score (M = 50.42, SD = 8.331) for skills required by the business sector. The observed mean difference was statistically significant, $t(222) = 9.559$, $p < .005$. This result reflects a gap, with lecturers slightly overestimating students' proficiency compared to employers' expectations. Nonetheless, since the mean score of skills possessed by students exceeds the mean score of skills required by the industry, the findings confirm that NCE Business Education students are generally equipped with the necessary management skills for employment in the business sector in North-East Nigeria. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected.

4.3 Discussion of findings

The result from research question suggests that the extent of management skills required by the business sector from NCE Business Education students for employment opportunities is moderate. The findings revealed that lecturers rated the management skills possessed by students higher than the level required by industry managers. This indicates that NCE Business Education students possess management competencies necessary for organizational operations and workplace responsibilities. The findings further imply that students possess competencies in planning, organizing, leadership, communication, coordination, time management, and supervision of business activities, which are necessary for effective organizational performance. The moderate extent required by industry managers also suggests that management competencies are essential requirements for graduates seeking employment opportunities in business organizations.The test of the corresponding null hypothesis showed a significant difference between the mean ratings of lecturers and industry managers on the management skills required from NCE Business Education students for employment opportunities, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. The significant difference may have resulted from variations in workplace expectations and practical

managerial experiences. The finding of the study concurred with the findings of Okolie et al. (2020), who observed that Business Education programmes equip students with managerial and leadership competencies relevant for workplace performance. The finding also agreed with Afolabi and Ogunyemi (2022), who found that management-oriented instructional activities enhance students' organizational and supervisory competencies. The implication of the finding is that NCE Business Education students possess management skills relevant for employment opportunities in the business sector. However, there is a need for greater practical exposure through leadership simulations, project-based learning, internships, and workplace management exercises to further strengthen students' managerial effectiveness and leadership abilities in real business situations.

Conclusion

The study concluded that NCE Business Education students in Colleges of Education in North-East Nigeria possess management skills that are relevant for employment opportunities in the business sector. The findings showed that students have competencies in planning, organizing, leadership, communication, coordination, and supervision, which are essential for workplace effectiveness. However, the significant difference between the ratings of lecturers and industry managers indicates a gap between students' acquired skills and employers' expectations. Therefore, there is a need to strengthen practical management training through internships, industrial attachment, and workplace-based learning experiences to enhance graduates' employability and managerial effectiveness.

Recommendation

The management of Colleges of Education should improve management skills acquisition among NCE Business Education students by introducing practical leadership and management activities such as leadership simulations, project management exercises, and industrial work experience programmes. This can be executed through the establishment of internship partnerships with business organizations, organization of leadership training programmes, and engagement of students in team-based management activities that will expose them to real workplace management practices.

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