

# Employability Skills of Business Education Graduates of Colleges of Education in North-West Nigeria

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## Abstract

The aim of the research is to find out the extent to which graduates of Business Education acquired employability skills on graduation from Colleges of Education in North-West Nigeria. The mandate of Business Education aims at skills acquisition to make graduates employable, self-employed, and self-reliant or employer of labour. One research question and one null hypothesis guided the study. The population for the study consisted of all business education lecturers in Colleges of Education, registered Small and Medium Scale Enterprises and Ministry of Commerce and Industries staff in North West Nigeria. The proportionate stratified and purposive sampling techniques were employed to selected sample size of 302 respondents, made up of 87 lecturers, 220 Directors/managers of SMSEs and staff of Ministry of Commerce and Industries in North West Nigeria. A structured questionnaire was used as instrument for data collection, which was face validated by experts. Cronbach Alpha Reliability Coefficient of 0.86 was obtained for the study. The instrument was administered on personal contact with the help research assistants. The data collected were analyzed using mean in answering the research question while t-test analysis was employed in testing the null hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance. It was found that Business Education NCE graduates possess employability skills to a moderate extent from departments of business education, Colleges of Education North West Nigeria. Business educators in Colleges of Education North-West Nigeria should adopt teaching pedagogical to inculcate employability skills in NCE students.

**Keywords:** Employability skills, Business Education, Graduates, Colleges of Education.

## 1. Introduction

Business education is an aspect of learning that prepares individuals for roles in business and offers them knowledge about business. Obanya (2002) in Nwazor (2014) opined that business education is an educational programme that is offered at the higher institution which prepares students for careers in business through inculcating in them skills, knowledge about or useful in the business world. Njoku (2006) opined that business education empowers graduates with desired skills, knowledge and values to become self-reliant. Business education is a component of vocational technical education programme that prepares an individual for career in business and also to be an intelligent consumer of economic goods and services (Utoware and Kren-Ikidi, 2014). Business education provides students with the needed competencies, skills, knowledge, understanding and attitude to perform as workers in industries, civil service and also as proprietors of businesses. According to Ugwoke (2011), business education is work-focused, skill-based, result-oriented and technology-based. For business education programme to sustain its relevance in providing the needs of individuals and that of the society, it must embrace current trends of new technology in the academic and economic demands of the society.

### 1.1 Challenges of Employability Skills

According to the Bureau of Statistics, 38% of the population that falls within the employable age is unemployed and 65% of Nigerian youth face unemployment as at September 2016 (NBS, 2017). Ajika (2002) posited that Business Education covers a wide range of spectrum of economic life activities in any society, and also refers to the pedagogical and desirable business competencies necessary for self-employment or being employed with a view to making the recipient self-reliant.

According to Lees (2002) employability refers to the ability to gain initial employment, maintain employment and obtain new employment if required. In simple terms, employability is about being capable of getting and keeping fulfilling work. Employability is having a set of skills, knowledge, understanding and personal attributes to be engaged in a gainful employment. Employability skills is related to work and the ability to be employed, such as:

- The ability to gain initial employment; hence the interest in ensuring that 'key competencies', careers advice and an understanding about the world of work are embedded in the education system.
- The ability to maintain employment and make 'transitions' between jobs and roles within the same organization to meet new job requirements, and
- The ability to obtain new employment if required, i.e. to be independent in the labour market by being willing and able to manage their own employment transitions between and within organisations. It is the continuously fulfilling, acquiring or creating of work through the optimal use of efforts.

Little (2003) defines employability skills as the ability of a graduate to get a satisfying job, stating that job acquisition should not be prioritized over preparedness for employment to avoid pseudo measure of individual employability. Lees (2002) further argues that employability is not a set of skills but a range of experiences and attributes developed through higher-level learning, thus employability is not a "product" but a process of learning. The author further stated that employability is a set of achievements, skills, understandings and personal attributes that make graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations, which benefits themselves, the workforce, the community and the economy. It is the establishment of clear mechanisms by which students can develop their abilities to use and deploy a wide range of skills and opportunities to enhance their own academic learning and enable them to become more employable.

Lees (2002) further stated that employability is a set of achievements that make graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations, which would benefit them, the work force, the community and the economy. In large measure, employability pertains to the matching of workers' skills, knowledge and personal attributes with industry needs. In its 2014 report on employability, the World Economic Forum (WEF) notes that skills are critical assets for individuals, businesses and societies. The importance of skills becomes even more pronounced in a fast-changing, globalized environment. Skills mismatch occurs when workers have either fewer or more skills than what jobs require. As the WEF (2014) explains, some mismatch is inevitable, as the labour market involves complex decisions by employers and workers and depends on many external factors. Nevertheless, high and persistent skills mismatch could be costly for employers, workers and society at large.

Many scholars are of the view that employability and working skills are virtually comprised of the same characteristics across the world. Dacre and Sewell (2007) argue that employability is a contested discourse involving "global actors and local governments, employers, industry, students and academic associations, professional governing bodies, and quality assurance and accreditation agencies". Employability is perceived as a set of achievements, such as skills, understandings, and personal attributes that makes one employable. Zalizan and Norzaini (2007) argues that employability should not merely address issues on the ways to develop workers' attributes, techniques, or experience, but on the content area or learning dimension of learners, such as critical and reflective abilities, with a view to empowering and enhancing the learner. The former connotes the process of acquiring competencies while the latter refers to the attributes and capabilities that are the outcomes of the learning process. The outcome is manifested by the possession of relevant competencies, namely, knowledge, skills, abilities, and other desirable characteristics. In this regard, the concept of employability encompasses both the individual's employment-ready status and the process of acquiring competencies before they become work ready. With regard to employability as an outcome of the education process, Pollard and Hillage cited in Armstrong (2012) suggested that the attributes of employability should cover the ability to (a) gain initial employment, (b) maintain employment, (c) move between jobs and roles within the same organization, (d) meet new job requirements, or (e) obtain new employment. An employable graduate, hence, may be described as an individual who has completed their studies and is currently available for work, has job-related competencies, and makes arrangements to start a job or apply for another job. Underscoring the notion that employability is explained by a graduate's employment status and the competencies he or she possesses.

#### **1.1.1 Purpose of the study**

The purpose of the research is to find out employability skills of business education NCE graduates of Colleges of Education in North-West Nigeria. The aim of this research is to ensure that the mandate of Business Education to prepare well qualified and competent NCE graduates in Business Education who will be able to teach business subjects in our junior secondary schools and other related occupation is achieved.

#### **1.1.2 Research Question**

The following research question was answered in line with the objective of the study:  
to what extent do Business Education NCE graduate acquired Employability Skills?

#### **1.1.3 Hypothesis**

The following null hypothesis formulated for the study was tested at 0.05 level of significance:

H<sub>01</sub>: There is no significant difference in the mean responses of lectures of Business Education Departments in Colleges of Education and Staff/Managers of SMSEs in North-West Nigeria on the Employability skills of Business Education NCE graduates in North-West Nigeria.

#### **1.1.4 Methodology**

The descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The study was carried out in 13 Colleges of Education, registered Small and Medium scale Enterprises and Ministry of Commerce and Industries in North West Nigeria. The sample for the study comprised of 652 respondents, make up of 87 business education lecturers, 220 Directors/managers of SMSEs and staff of Ministry of Commerce and Industries. The research instrument for data collections was structured questionnaire based on the research objectives. The instrument was designed to elicit the ratings mean of respondents on the 5-point Likert-type rating scale as follows: Very Great extent (VGE) 5-pts, Great extent (GE) 4-pts; Moderate Extent (ME) 3-pts; Little Extent (LE) 2-pts and

None At All (NAA) 1-pts . The questionnaire was administered to the respondents personally by the researcher with the help of research assistants. Out of the 336 copies of questionnaire administered 307 were retrieved.

The mean was used for answering the research question, while t-test was used for testing the null hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance. The analysis was done using the statistical package for social science (SPSS) version 25. The null hypothesis was accepted if the probability value provide by computer is less than or equal to the criterion probability value of 0.05, otherwise the null hypothesis was rejected.

## 2. Results

Research Question: to what extent does Business Education NCE Graduates acquired Employability Skills?

**Table 1**

**Mean Rating of Respondents on the Extents to which Business Education Graduates acquired Employability Skills**

S/No	Items	X	SD	Decision
	<b>Indicate the extent to which Business Education NCE graduates of Colleges of Education have Employability Skills in your organization/department?</b>			
1.	Have skills, knowledge, understanding and personal attributes for employment	3.07	.85	Moderate Extent
2.	Have ability to gain, maintain and obtain new employment as required by employers	3.01	.72	Moderate Extent
3.	Have ability to transform vision into reality	2.31	.72	Little Extent
4.	Faced challenges and overcome them in work place	2.40	.69	Little Extent
5.	Have sense of initiative in work place	3.06	.86	Moderate Extent
6.	Can work independently to bring transformation	2.21	.90	Little Extent
7.	Have ability to manage fund and cash flow well when the business starts to grow	2.00	.84	Little Extent
8.	Have teaching pedagogy/method of teaching	3.14	.80	Moderate Extent
9.	Have ability to focus ones energy and work hard towards the progress of the enterprise	3.05	.91	Moderate Extent
10.	Have ability to identify, assess and mitigate risks	2.06	.90	Little Extent
11	Have the ability to see and act on opportunities	2.04	.89	Little Extent
12	Have a mindset to look for business opportunities from everyday experience	3.09	.87	Moderate Extent
13	Have the ability to build networks	2.19	.75	Little Extent
14	Have Quality performance competency	2.97	.83	Moderate Extent
15	Have self-efficacy	3.08	.73	Moderate Extent
	<b>Cluster Mean</b>	<b>2.64</b>	<b>.89</b>	<b>Moderate Extent</b>

The data in Table 1 revealed that eight (8) items have a mean scores ranging from 2.97 to 3.14 which were within the boundary limit for Moderate extent. This implies that Business Education NCE graduates in Colleges of Education, North West Nigeria, have employability skills in these items to a moderate extent. However, 7 items had their mean scores ranging from 2.00 to 2.40 which were within the boundary limit for little extent. This implies that Business Education NCE graduates in Colleges of Education, North West Nigeria, were considered to have employability skills to a little extent. The table further revealed the cluster mean of 2.64 which is within the boundary limit for moderate extent, implying that all the items in the table indicated that Business Education NCE graduates in Colleges of Education, North-West Nigeria are considered to have employability skills to a moderate extent. This is supported by the standard deviations on each of the items as well as the overall standard deviation which ranges from .69 to .91 which shows the similarity to the opinions of the respondents.

**Table 2:**

**t-test Analysis of Mean Responses of lecturers of Business Education Department in Colleges of Education and staff of MOC/managers of SMSEs in North-West Nigeria on the acquisition of employability skills by Business Education NCE graduates.**

Employability skills of NCE Bus. Educ. Students	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	t-value	Df	sig. (2-tailed)	Decision
Business Educ. Lecturers	87	2.99	.414	-.77	305	0.64	NS
Ministry staff/SMES	220	3.08	.391				

Table 2 showed the t-test used to analysis the mean responses of lecturers in the Departments of Business Education in Colleges of Education North-West Nigeria and managers/staff of Ministry of Commerce and Industries/Small and Medium Enterprises North-West Nigeria on the acquisition of employability skills by Business Education NCE graduates of Colleges of Education North West Nigeria. The statistical result shows that the items tested are not significant. The sig. value of 0.06 at 0.05 level of significance shows that the null hypothesis of no significant difference between the mean responses of lecturers and manager/staff of MOC/SMEs on the acquisition of employability skills of Business Education NCE graduates of Colleges of Education North-West Nigeria is, therefore, accepted. This means that lecturers and managers/staff responses on the acquisition of employability skills of Business Education NCE graduates in Colleges of Education North West Nigeria are the same or similar.

### 3. Discussion

It was found that Business Education NCE graduates possess employability skills to a moderate extent from Departments of Business Education in Colleges of Education North West Nigeria. The research also found that NCE graduates do not possess employability skills to a “very great extent or great extent” as would have been expected in academic excellent. It was also on the findings that there was no significant difference in the mean responses of lecturers and manager/staff of ministry of commerce and industries/small and medium scale enterprises of employability skills of Business Education NCE graduates of Colleges of Education North-West.

It was found that Business Education NCE graduate from Colleges of Education North-West Nigeria possessed employability skills to a moderate extent as shown in Table 1. This support the view of Ezeji and Okore (2009) who opined that acquisition of employability skills lead to a significant reduction of unemployment among graduates. The authors also stressed the importance of acquisition of employable skills in national growth, emphatically contended, that Nigeria’s social and economic problems will be drastically reduced if graduates are given adequate vocational training in skills, raw materials, machineries and equipment. It is only with acquisition of employable skills that graduates can harness, manipulate and transform materials into products. With quality skills acquisition by graduates, they can contribute meaningfully to the economy and development of high volume of productivity in the country. This supports the view of Abayomi et. al. (2014) who opined that the purpose of graduates posing employable skills is to equip the individual and create the mindset to undertake the risk of venturing into applying the knowledge and skills gotten from school. Other issues like the provision of individuals with enough training to enable creativity and innovation relevant to skill acquisition to encourage self-employment and self-reliant. The result further revealed that Business Education NCE graduates in Colleges of Education North-West Nigeria possess employable skills to a little extent in some areas, this further support the views of Abayomi et. al. (2014) who stated that problem with Nigerian educational programmes is the too much emphasis on the value on certificate rather than the skills required in the career. In other words, the individual struggle hard through any means to attain the golden fleece which is the certificate rather than the knowledge and skills which should make them self-reliant. This result supports the view of Uloko and Ejinkonye (2010) who stated that most youths graduate from school without the needed skills or competencies that would enable them function in today’s emerging society. Going by this view, it is apparent that the role of skills acquisition in the creation of employment among NCE graduates in Colleges of Education in North-West Nigeria may not be overemphasized.

The outcome of the study which revealed tht business education NCE graduates from departments of business education in Colleges of Education North-West Nigeria possess employability skills to a moderate extent and little extent in different areas is a challenge to business educators to adopt teaching pedagogy that will inculcate employability skills in their students. This finding is supported by Ebele, (2008) who opined that one of the approaches to achieve graduate skills acquisition in Nigeria is through teaching and research of basic skills, entrepreneurship and innovation. Tertiary institutions should establish and promote tertiary institutions-private sector collaboration. This should involve developing the capacity of staff and students in entrepreneurship and innovation, engaging in outreach activities with small and medium enterprises through such interventions as business incubators. Training students in employability skills and conducting research and consultancies are inevitable as it pertains to entrepreneurial, industrial and economic growth in Nigeria. For this, education should be refined with a view to create and enhance the acquisition of skills in students initiatives and activities.

The result of hypothesis in Table 2 showed that there was no significant difference between the mean responses of lecturers and managers/staff responses on the acquisition of employability skills of Business Education NCE graduates from Colleges of Education North West Nigeria. This mean that lecturers and managers/staff of MOC and SMEs responses on the acquisition of employability skills by Business Education NCE graduates of Colleges of Education North West Nigeria are the same.

Business Education NCE graduates in Colleges of Education North-West Nigeria possessed employability skills to a moderate extent. However, the finding indicated that some NCE graduates possessed employable skills to “Little Extent” indicating that some NCE graduates possessed very little employable skills after their training.



#### 4. Conclusion

The finding also concludes that Business Education NCE graduates in Colleges of Education, North West Nigeria, have employability skills to a moderate extent. There were no significant differences in the mean ratings of lecturers, students, Managers/staff of ministry of Commerce and Industries/small and medium scale enterprises North-West Nigeria on the acquisition of employability skills by Business Education NCE graduates of Colleges of Education North West Nigeria. The findings of this study has established the fact that business education departments should aimed at training students towards skills acquisition as it ensures qualitative education and makes the students self-reliant and employable. Quality and skills acquisition is of necessity and very essential to make the student more viable in the world of work.

#### 5. Recommendations

1. Business educators in Colleges of Education North-West Nigeria should adopt teaching pedagogical methodologies to inculcate employability skills in NCE students.
2. Business education departments should partner with industries around their institutions to use their modern technologies to redefine learning in order to better their products to meet workplace skills.
3. Business education curriculum should embrace teaching of positive behaviours that will help their graduates succeed in acquiring employability skills.

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