

COMMUNICATION SKILLS AND EMPLOYABILITY OF BUSINESS EDUCATION GRADUATES IN UNIVERSITIES IN SOUTH-SOUTH, NIGERIA

Moses, Promise Z. O.¹ & Amakodi, Sunday E.²

¹Department of Business Education, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Rivers State

²Alvan Ikoku Federal University of Education, Owerri

Abstract

The study investigated communication skills and employability of business education graduates in Universities in South-South, Nigeria. Correlational research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study comprised 547 postgraduate students from eight Government-owned universities in South-South, Nigeria offering Business Education programme at the postgraduate level. 217 post graduate students were selected using the simple random sampling technique as the sample for the study. The instrument for data collection was a self-constructed questionnaire titled: Communication skills and employability of Business Education Graduates Questionnaire (CSBEGQ). The reliability of the instrument was determined using Cronbach alpha reliability method yielding a reliability index of 0.85. The data collected was analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) coefficient method to answer research questions and test the null hypotheses. The findings of the study indicated that there is a significant relationship between communication skills and paid employment among business education graduates and there is a significant relationship between communication skills and self-employment among business education graduates in South-South, Nigeria. The study concluded that there is a significant relationship between communication skills and self-employment among business education graduates in South-South, Nigeria. It was recommended that the government and Ministry of Education should provide the needed information for policy formulation and recommendation as regards entrepreneurship in tertiary institutions.

Keywords: Communication, Employability, Business Education, Graduates

Introduction

Entrepreneurship has never been more important than it is today in this time of financial crisis. At the same time, society faces massive global challenges that extend well beyond the economy. Innovation and entrepreneurship provide a way forward for solving the global challenges of the 21st century, building sustainable development, creating jobs, generating renewed economic growth and advancing human welfare. When we speak about entrepreneurship, we are defining it in the broadest terms and in all forms. Now more than ever, we need innovation, new solutions, creative approaches and new ways of operating. Entrepreneurship is first and foremost a mindset of human beings, focused on the generation or profitable ideas. An entrepreneur is an individual who identifies opportunities, takes risks, and organizes resources to create and manage a new business or venture, typically with the goal of making a profit. Entrepreneurs are often seen as innovators, bringing new ideas, products, or services to market and they play a crucial role in driving economic growth and creating jobs (Hisrich, Peters & Shepherd, 2023). Barringer and Ireland (2023) asserted that certain skills are required to navigate challenges as an entrepreneur and these entrepreneurial skills are communication, team work, leadership, marketing skills, problem solving and so on. Communication, is the process of exchanging information, ideas, thoughts, or feelings between individuals or groups through various mediums such as speech, writing, gestures, or digital platforms (Beebe, Beebe & Ivy, 2023). It involves both the transmission and the reception of messages and can occur in both formal and informal contexts. Effective communication is critical in personal, professional, and organizational settings as it helps build relationships,

resolve conflicts, and enhance collaboration. The teaching profession requires perfect communication skills because the potential of teachers to develop students is something related to effective communication. This is a tool necessary for entrepreneurship and self-reliance. Communication is where people in an organization exchange information regarding the operations of the enterprise. It is the inter-change of ideas, facts, and emotions by two or more persons by the use of words, letters, memos, and symbols. Communication is vital because it entails the right use of words in expressing intended ideas. Communication, according to Okute and Olom (2012), is concerned with the generation, transmission, interpretation and use of information.

Entrepreneurs need to be good communicators in order to effectively communicate within and outside their enterprises to become successful. Guile and Unwin (2022) observed that occupational expertise has always been constituted and afforded recognition and status in work contexts that are interconnected and interrelated, underpinned by intangible assets. Good Communication Skills therefore are very important to one's success for self-reliance. Okolocha et al. (2020) stated that business education trains her students in business skills and knowledge necessary for office career that will enable them become self-reliant on graduation. Huang et al. (2022) noted that in professional training programmes, how to help learners fully understand the contexts and problem-solving procedure in the workplace is a crucial challenging issue due to the advancements of computer and multimedia technology. They further explained that such training help learners gain knowledge and improve their higher order thinking, as well as in applying what they had learned to solve real problems. Communication skills are the tools used to clearly and effectively converse with others, set expectations and work with others on projects in any organization. It is a form of verbal and written communication used every day at the work place. Whether for writing a cover letter to apply for a job, taking up an issue with manager or looking to green light a new initiative at work. Every professional irrespective of their field should be able to convey their thoughts with clarity and confidence both in written and oral forms.

Klein in Ann-Marie (2015) viewed communication skills as the ability to actively listen, to communicate in oral, written, and nonverbal forms. He further reported the view of employers of labour on business education graduates that they lacked skills, including communication skills. Communication, which is a vital skill for all professions, is at the core of the teaching profession in terms of teacher-student relationships (Ann-Marie (2015). The teaching profession requires perfect communication skills, because the potential of teachers to develop students is something related to effective communication. Thus, teachers should both communicate effectively with others and carry out technical tasks to be successful professionals (Igbokwe, 2022). Communication is indispensable to any organization's achievement. Communication is a critical point for human resource leaders which must be in alignment with the organization's management and its labour (Eretan and Omotoso, 2024). Communication involves at least two people: the sender and the receiver. There are four types of communication between senders and receivers: writing, speaking, listening, and conducting meetings. Each one is important to your success in the workplace.

The four most common types of communication used by managers include interpersonal communication, nonverbal communication, written communication and oral communication. Interpersonal communication has to do with the exchange of information, feelings, thoughts, and ideas between two or more people. Nonverbal communication deals with the transmission of messages or information without the use of words and oral communication is the process of exchanging information, thoughts or feelings through spoken words. Communication at its core is the transfer of information from one person to another with the information being understood by both parties. The central function of communication in an entrepreneurial setting is to reach a definite corporate goal. Communication in business conveys to the vital management functions which include planning, organizing, staffing, directing and controlling (Kruse, 2013). The management process of decision making,

coordinating, delegation, centralization and decentralization are all surrounded by communication. Johnson and Lee (2018) described communication as the process by which information is transmitted and understood between two or more people. Imeokparia and Ediagbonya (2012) mentioned what an entrepreneur requires for effective communication skills to include how communication process helps the entrepreneur effect the managerial functions of planning, organizing, staffing, influencing, interacting, controlling and coordinating. In terms of information flow within an organization, it moves indifferent directions depending on the employee hierarchy within the organization. In the contemporary business setting, information flows faster than ever before. This is required since the advent of the internet era where such mediums, both for social and business are highly employed in business organizations. Such media platforms include Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, WhatsApp, Google+, LinkedIn, YouTube, among others. Information needs to flow faster now than ever before because slightest shortage in information flow could be very costly. In present day business world, information must flow uninterruptedly as information stoppage on a fast moving production line can cause a huge damage in terms of output as well as loss of customer's goodwill.

The communication skills needed for employability of business education graduates are the ability to exchange ideas, opinions or information in the organization, ability to build up the organizational climate, ability to give instructional supervision in the organization, development of a good listening ability, ability to deal with premature assumptions, ability to understand the physical and human environment of the organization, It aids the transfer of ideas, feelings, insights, facts, attitudes or intents to others for the purpose of influencing their behaviours, ability to listen attentively, ability to render supportive services to the customers, ability to take decisions based on the available facts, ability to delegate authority to employees, ability to interact with people openly and fairly, ability to encourage innovation, ability to control emotions and situations as the need arises (understanding body language), being sensitive to the needs of others empathetically, ability to handle team conflict, ability to handle customer's grievances. Hence Akeke *et.al.* (2022) also revealed that there is a significant relationship between communication skills and employability skills for business education graduates' in Cross River State.

Deducing from the above assertions, if these business education graduates are fully equipped with the required communication skills will there be an increase in the rate of employability?

Statement of Problem

Contemporary societies generally rely on entrepreneurship and skill acquisitions for the survival of her graduates as this is a tool that helps to strengthen students upon graduation as foundation for their development and sustainability. Entrepreneurship education is one of the major key player in the employability of business education graduates who have taken up paid employment based on the entrepreneurial skills acquired while in schools and also those that are readily available for gainful employment in the labour market such as white collar jobs, blue collar jobs and gold collar jobs. The business education graduates who have gone through the undergraduate programme in universities are expected to have acquired paid employment skills such as communication skills, team work skills, leadership skills and sales skills that will enable them own and manage their businesses and become employers of labour. With nonexistence of these skills, Business Education graduates roam about the streets of Nigeria in search for jobs that are not obtainable. This situation is conspicuously reflected by the alarming rate of unemployed Business Education graduates in Nigeria. It is on this note that this work aim to investigate the extent to which communication skills relate to employability of business education graduates in south-south, Nigeria.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study was to examine the relationship between communication skills and paid employment of business education graduates in South-South, Nigeria; Specifically, the study sought to:

1. examine the relationship between communication skills and paid employment of business education graduates in South-South, Nigeria.
2. investigate the relationship between communication skills and self-employment of business education graduates in South-South, Nigeria.

Research Questions

1. What is the relationship between communication skills and paid employment of business education graduates in South-South, Nigeria?
2. What is the relationship between communication skills and self-employment of business education graduates in South-South, Nigeria?

Hypotheses

Ho₁: There is no significant relationship between communication skills and self-employment of business education graduates in South-South, Nigeria.

Ho₂: There is no significant relationship between communication skills and paid employment of business education graduates in South-South, Nigeria.

Methods

The design for the study was the correlational research design. Research questions and their corresponding null hypotheses were answered and tested using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC). The population comprised 547 postgraduate students from eight (8) Government-owned universities in South-South, Nigeria offering Business Education programme at the postgraduate level and a sample size of 217 post graduate students were selected using the simple random sampling technique because every element in the population is given an equal chance of being selected. Besides, it is most suitable for a finite population. Data were collected using the Communication skills and employability of Business Education Graduates Questionnaire (CSBEGQ) with a reliability coefficient of 0.85 computed using Cronbach alpha method. The data collected was analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) coefficient method to answer research questions and test the null hypotheses.

Research Question One: What is the relationship between communication skills and paid employment of business education graduates in South-South, Nigeria?

HO₁: There no significant relationship between communication skills and paid employment of business graduates in South-South Nigeria.

Table 1: Relationship between communication skills and paid employment of business graduates in South-South Nigeria

		Correlations	
		Communication skills	Paid employment
Communication skills	Pearson Correlation	1	0.62**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.01
	N	214	214
Paid employment	Pearson Correlation	0.62**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.01	
	N	214	214

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 1 revealed that the relationship between communication skills and paid employment of business education graduates in South-South, Nigeria is 0.62 which is 62%. This result shows that there is a moderate relationship between communication skills and paid employment of business graduates in South-South Nigeria. This result shows that as scores on communication skills increases, there is a corresponding increase in the scores on paid employment of business graduates in South-South Nigeria. Table 1 indicates that the relationship between communication skills and paid employment of graduates in South-South Nigeria is significant at 0.05 level of significance. The result of the null hypothesis is that there is a significant relationship between communication skills and paid employment of graduates in South-South Nigeria at 0.05 level of significance. The result of the null hypothesis is rejected. This is because the p-value (0.01) is less than the level of significance (0.05). The result of the null hypothesis is that there is a significant relationship between communication skills and paid employment of graduates in South-South Nigeria.

Research Question Two: What is the relationship between communication skills and self-employment of business education graduates in South-South, Nigeria?

HO₂: There is no significant relationship between communication skills and self-employment of business education graduates in South-South, Nigeria.

Table 2: Relationship between communication skills and self-employment of business graduates in South-South Nigeria

		Correlations	
		Communication skills	Self-employment
Communication skills	Pearson Correlation	1	0.70**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.00
	N	214	214
Self-employment	Pearson Correlation	0.70**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.00	
	N	214	214

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 2 revealed that the relationship between communication skills and self-employment of business education graduates in South-South, Nigeria is 0.70 which is 70%. This result shows that there is a moderate relationship between communication skills and self-employment of business graduates in South-South Nigeria. This result shows that as scores on communication skills increases, there is a corresponding increase in the scores on self-employment of business graduates in South-South Nigeria. The result indicates that there is a significant relationship between communication skills and self-employment of business graduates in South-South Nigeria. Table 2 indicates that the relationship between communication skills and self-employment of graduates in South-South Nigeria is significant at 0.05 level of significance. The result of the null hypothesis is that there is a significant relationship between communication skills and self-employment of graduates in South-South Nigeria at 0.05 level of significance. The result of the null hypothesis is rejected. This is because the p-value (0.00) is less than the level of significance (0.05). The result of the null hypothesis is that there is a significant relationship between communication skills and self-employment of graduates in South-South Nigeria.

Discussions

The result from table 1 indicated that there is a moderate relationship between communication skills and the paid employment among business education graduates in South-South, Rivers State. The moderate relationship between communication skills and paid employment among business education graduates in South-South, Rivers State means that business education graduates who had high scores in communication skills also had corresponding high scores in paid employment in the area, and vice versa. This result is in

agreement with Imeokparia and Ediabonya (2012) whose findings showed that communication skills relates positively to the paid employment of business education graduates in the area of their studies. In line with this, Akeke *et.al.* (2022) also revealed that there is a significant relationship between communication skills and employability skills for business education graduates' in Cross River State.

The result for table 2 revealed that there is a moderate relationship between communication skills and the self-employment among business education graduates in South-South, Nigeria. The moderate relationship between communication skills and the self-employment of graduate students in the area revealed that as scores on communication skills increases, there is increase in the scores on self-employment and vice versa in the area. In other words, graduate students who score highly on communication skills had high scores on self-employment in universities in south south Nigeria. This result is in agreement with Dutaa and Ion-Ovidiu (2015) that there is a positive but significant relationship between communication skills and the self-employment of graduate students in universities in south south Nigeria. In line with this, Igbokwe (2022) opined that teachers should both communicate effectively with others and carry out technical tasks to be successful professionals.

Conclusion

From the findings, the study has been able to establish the fact that if communication skills are enhanced, employability of business education graduates will increase.

Recommendations

1. The government and Ministry of Education should provide the needed information for policy formulation and recommendation as regards entrepreneurship in tertiary institutions.
2. The National University Commission (NUC) should use the findings of the study as a guide in policy formulation.

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