

INFLUENCE OF INSTITUTIONAL VARIABLES ON EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS ACQUISITION AMONG BUSINESS EDUCATION STUDENTS IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN CROSS RIVER STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT: *This study determined the influence of institutional variables on employability skills acquisition among Business Education students in tertiary institutions in Cross River State, Nigeria. Survey research design was employed in carrying out the study. Data were collected using a researcher-made questionnaire which was validated by two Vocational Educators and an expert in Measurement and Evaluation. A reliability estimate of .80, .81 and .87 was achieved for the research variables using Cronbach Alpha Statistical Analysis, after a trial test was conducted using 20 final year Business Education students in University of Uyo who did not form part of the main study sample. The questionnaire was administered to 400 final year Business Education students using stratified and accidental sampling techniques. Data analysis was done, while two (2) hypotheses were formulated and tested for significance using Simple Linear Regression Statistical Technique. Analyzed data were presented in form of tables and the results revealed that there is significant influence of classroom climate and instructional method on employability skills acquisition among Business Education Students. Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended among others that the teacher should always utilize practical method of instruction that can help the students concretize what they learn and apply it in real life situation as learnt.*

KEYWORDS: Institutional variables, Employability Skills, Business Education, Cross River State, Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

Tertiary Education (TE) has the mandate to train learners for the work force and the self-reliance need. The Federal Government of Nigeria (2013) has expressly stated the relevance of education as an instrument for excellence. Education is conceived as the oxygen for development and the manure that stirs societal growth. It is aimed at producing productive and creative citizens with identifiable characteristics that can make them functional members of the society. Functionality, according to Ben (2010) is the ability of the individual to contribute to himself and the society at large. In order for this to be achieved, the tertiary education which is the apex of education in Nigeria is programmed to ensure that graduates from there acquire the skills that would enable them live meaningfully in the society.

One of the major goals of tertiary education as stated in National Policy of Education of Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 2013) is that students will acquire both physical and intellectual skills which will enable individuals to be self-reliant and useful members of the society. But this goal is yet to be achieved Musari in Chukwurah and Atah (2017) reported that about 4.5 million youths

enter the labour market every year without any hope of getting employment for life sustenance due to lack of employability skills.

Yorke and Knight (2006) defined employability as a set of achievements – skills, understanding and personal attributes that make graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations. According to Toland (2011), employability skills are non-discipline specific, economically valuable skills required to get initial employment, progress in a job, as well as securing another job when desired. Careers and Employability Centre, Loughborough University in Orji (2013) described employability skills as the professional competency sought after by employers which their students are helped to develop alongside subject/discipline. In this study, employability refers to the set of skills, competency and attributes that increase school leaver's chances of obtaining initial worthwhile employment, maintaining and progressing in the employment, obtaining new employment if required, and being satisfied on the job. These skills include analytical and problem-solving skills, numeracy, confidence, time management, team working, communication skills, information technology, and monitoring skills. Employability skills are diverse. Etuk (2013) identified employability skills to include communication, self-reliance, organization, initiative and enterprise, commercial awareness, problem-solving, team work and leadership, time management, and customer services. According to Learner (2012), eight nationally agreed employability skills in Australia are: communication; planning and organizing; teamwork, problem solving; self-management; initiative and enterprise; technology; and learning. Duruamaku-Dim (2004) highlighted a number of employability skills which include visionary, leadership, managerial, tactical, strategic planning, and sense of judgement, delegating, motivation, intellect and knowledge as well as skill of ethics.

However, many researchers have continued to marvel on the probable causes of increased unemployment among fresh graduates of Business Education in Nigeria given these vast of skills they are supposed to possess. A number of factors have been deduced to be responsible for unemployment among youths in Nigeria. Most of the causes are attributed to godfathers, corruption, increased in number of graduates per year, insufficient incisures to carter for the increased rate of graduates, lack of vocational skill among others.

Uchendu (2015) stated that the products of tertiary education in this 21st century appear to be skill deficient that is they lack basic skills such as computer skills, vocational skills, communication skills, ethical skills, team work skills, entrepreneurship skills, personal management skills, and leadership skills among others. Thus, these graduates lack what it takes to provide employment for themselves and others in the society. This has given rise to producing graduates who are more of job seekers rather than job creator. The result of this type of education (training) has been high level of unemployment. It increases every year because of the number of graduates that enters the labour market and unemployment rate has increase from 21 percent in 2010 to 24 percent in 2011 (Muslim, 2013). Therefore, one may assume that tertiary institutions especially in Cross River State have not been living up to expectation in solving the problems of life by equipping graduates with employability skills.

Jakpa in Uchendu (2015) observed that Nigeria educational system does not train our youths to acquire skills that will make them the needs of the society. The effect of this lack of skills is evident in the activities of the youths. Majority of the youths who are not employed and cannot begin a new

business venture of their have resulted to armed robbery, prostitution, political thuggery, vandalization of oil pipe lines, kidnapping among other societal ills that are exhibited in the society. Government and non-governmental organizations have tried to ensure that graduates from various tertiary institutions especially vocational Business Education graduates acquire skills that may help them establish themselves without necessary waiting for the government. For example, entrepreneurship education is embedded into the curriculum, Business Education is equipped with programmes that develop human abilities in terms of knowledge, skill and understanding to carry on activities in the vocation and students are equally allowed for industrial training scheme, establishment of acquisition skills centres all around but the problem still persist. The researcher is presuming that institutional variables such as classroom climate and instructional method could be responsible for this lack of employability skills acquisition among undergraduates in tertiary institutions. The researcher envisaged that the findings of the study may be beneficial to universities administrators, students, government and staff of various universities.

Institutional variables are centered on students supports provided by the colleges and universities that the students attend. It is concerned with those variables within the school environment that influences the activities of the teacher and students. One key institutional variable is classroom climate. Classroom climate referred to as the learning environment, as well as by terms such as atmosphere, ambience, ecology, and milieu. The impact of classroom climate on students and staff can be beneficial for or a barrier to learning. It emerges in a somewhat fluid state from the complex transaction of many immediate environmental factors (e.g., physical, material, organizational, operational, and social variables).

Alberta (2005) affirmed that both the climate of the classroom and the school reflect the influence of a school's culture, which a stable quality is emerging from underlying, institutionalized values and belief systems, norms, ideologies, rituals, and traditions. And, of course, classroom climate and culture both are shaped by the school's surrounding and embedded political, social, cultural, and economic contexts (e.g., home, neighbourhood, city, state, country). According to Alberta (2005), the school and classroom climate have a significant impact on student behaviour and achievement. Important elements in a positive classroom climate include a sense of respect, security and safety, engagement and humour. Adelman and Taylor (in press) noted that classroom climate sometimes is referred to as the learning environment, as well as by terms such as atmosphere, ambience, ecology, and milieu. The impact of classroom climate on students and staff can be beneficial for or a barrier to learning.

According to Krull (2014), as education becomes more inclusive, teachers need to become more aware of how to organize groups of students and how the students are arranged can lead to a favourable environment. Well-organized classrooms are an important component to classroom functions as it leads to more dialogue and formative assessment much has been written about creativity in recent years as an essential constituent of the real life that allows personal growth and the development of culture and society. In the era of globalization it has been linked to its twin innovation since creativity brings new ideas, whereas innovation deals with practical application of them. The sustainable economic development can be reached only by creating and innovating new products, processes, and services.

Mboto (2010) carried out a study on institutional variables as predictors of employability skills acquisition among students in universities in Imo State. This study evaluated the level of employability skills on engineering students at higher education institutions from the perspective of employers. The descriptive study used quantitative approach involves a total of 171 respondents which is the engineering employers who were provided placement for industrial training to students of technical institutions. The instrument used in this study were adapted from the instruments of Modul Kemahiran Insaniah Kementerian Pengajian Tinggi Malaysia, Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skill (SCANS) Amerika, Malaysian Qualification Framework (MQF), MyGSI and IKGPP and several models from previous studies. The variables of this study are communication skills, spiritual skills, teamwork, leadership, lifelong learning and information management, critical thinking and problem solving, entrepreneurship, ethics and morality, technology skills, and social skills. Data collected were analyzed using descriptive and inferential analysis statistics. The results showed that the level of employability skills among engineering students from the employer's perspective is moderately high. The results also showed that there are no significant differences between student's employability skills that are assessed against the nature of the industry, the position and the employer experience, classroom climate and the location of the industry.

Another key institutional variable is the instructional method utilized by the teacher. Instructional methods are an educational approach for turning knowledge into learning. Instructional methods are the “how to” in the delivery of training. There is more than one method to use in training your students. The methods used in any learning situation are primarily dictated by the learning objectives decided upon by the course developers. In many cases a combination of methods are used to intensify the learning experiences. As an instructor, you need to understand the following methods and your responsibilities in using them. Lecture with audio-visuals, lesson, demonstration, role—playing, case study, and discussion.

Adesomu (2008) noted that for teachers to effectively impart the knowledge of business enterprise to the students in order to be self-reliant and start-up their business as well as employ others, they need to have full knowledge of business skills, therefore, the results shows that teachers need to employ problem based method, context based, students centred, demonstration and computer based methods for their teaching in order to effectively equip the students with such skills. However, the training of students to acquire the knowledge and skills in terms entrepreneurship and set-up their business after graduation is part of the goals of the current National Policy on Education in Nigeria, therefore, entrepreneurship skills is an important area in technical and vocational education in the country.

The ultimate aim of Vocational business education is for the acquisition of knowledge, attitude and employable skills for sustainable development. The acquisition of life-long employable skills calls for effective and efficient teaching methods, utilization of improved and standard instructional equipment, relevant curriculum and good quality of teachers. Skills acquisition by students can be achieved when the TVET institutions are adequately funded, equipped with adequate facilities and well-staffed with competent and experienced Tutors that adopt effective and efficient teaching methods (Dasmani, 2011).

In Ghana, Dasmani (2011) revealed that most TVET graduates attributed their unemployment to a number of factors including out dated and irrelevance in some parts of the curriculum, non-exposure to entrepreneurship education, practical subjects not well taught due to the absence of laboratory and inadequate practical demonstrations, obsolete equipment and materials in short supply. These short falls leads to too much theory-oriented training and little practice hence inadequate skills acquisition.

Anindo (2006) carried out a study on institutional factors influencing acquisition of employable skills by students in public technical and vocational education and training institutions in Nairobi country, Kenya. Four objectives guided the study: to establish the influence of academic qualification of TVET teachers, availability of training equipment, teaching methods and adequacy of TVET teachers on acquisition of employable skills. The study adopted descriptive survey design. The study targeted three TVET institutions in Nairobi County. The research instruments used were questionnaires' for teachers and students and an interview guide for principals. The data was analyzed using both descriptive and quantitative statistics. Data was presented in frequency tables and percentages.

The key study findings were that teachers had prerequisite academic qualification to teach in TVET institutions, the TVET teachers do not have any professional development program or industrial attachment, academic qualification of teachers' influences acquisition of employable skills by students. There is inadequate provision of training equipment, institutions do not have modern equipment that are relevant to those used in the industries, relevance of training equipment influences acquisition of employable skills, workshops were not well equipped , teachers mainly use lecture, demonstration, work based learning and discussion teaching methods due to large class sizes, inadequate training equipment and their influence on skills acquisition, the institutions have inadequate teaching staff hence are forced to hire part-time teachers or merge classes in order complete syllabuses. The study concluded that the four institutional factors investigated significantly influenced the employable skills acquired by students. It was recommended that industries should support TVET institution by providing industrial attachment programs for teachers, all stakeholders; parents, industries, government and donors should contribute in providing adequate training equipment, TVET teachers should use practically-oriented teaching methods like field trip, project work, simulation and work-based teaching often methods in order to achieve the desired result of imparting the employable skills necessary for the world of work and the government should support TVET institutions in hiring of more trained teachers to curb inadequacy of teachers and merging of classes.

Over the years, it is observed with dismay that vocational Business Education graduates are deficient in basic skills such as vocational skills, computer skills, leadership skills, tactical skills, ethical skills among others. These graduates tend to develop they cognitive domain to the detriment of psychomotor and affective domains. Thus, we have vocational Business Education graduates that are sound in knowledge but lack capacity for utilizing practical skills to solve problems, as such, most of the graduates are found roaming the street with files looking for white collar jobs. Many researchers have tried to examine what probably would have been the causes of this problem. Factors identified include development of students' cognitive domain to the detriment of psychomotor domain and affective domain, lacking capacity for utilizing practical skills to solve problem. The effect of this is evident in increased unemployment among fresh graduates of Business

Education which has caused many youths to resort to armed robbery, prostitution, militancy, kidnapping, thuggery and oil bunkery. Potential capitalists have lost their lives due to lack of skills that would have helped in developing themselves and the society at large. Government and administration of universities on their part have tried to bridge this deficiency gap by designed vocational Business Education as a programme aimed at equipping students with marketable skills, knowledge and attitudes needed for initial employment and advancement in business and related occupations. In spite of this attempt, not much has been achieved as high number of unemployed Business Education graduates has remained unabated. The researcher is asking, could institutional variables such as classroom climate and instructional methods be responsible for this lack of employability skills acquisition among Business Education students of tertiary institutions? It is in an attempt to answer this question that this research work was carried out.

Purpose of the study

The main purpose of the study was to determine the influence of institutional variables on employability skills acquisition among business education students in tertiary institutions in Cross River State. Specifically, the study seeks to find out whether:

- i. Classroom climate influences employability skills acquisition among Business Education students in tertiary institutions
- ii. Instructional method influences employability skills acquisition among Business Education students in tertiary institutions

Research questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study

- i. What is the influence of classroom climate on employability skills acquisition among Business Education students in tertiary institutions?
- ii. How does instructional method influence employability skills acquisition among Business Education students in tertiary institutions?

Research hypotheses

The hypotheses were stated in the null form as follows:

- i. There is no significant influence of classroom climate on employability skills acquisition among Business Education students in tertiary institutions
- ii. Instructional method has no significant influence on employability skills acquisition among students in tertiary institutions

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopts a survey research design. 400 Business Education (final year) students, out of a population of 800 Business Education (final year) students in all the public tertiary institutions in Cross River State, Nigeria were sampled in the study. This is presented in Table 1. The sample was drawn using stratified and accidental sampling techniques. Stratified technique was used to divide the area into four strata according to the number of institutions in the area. In each stratum, 50% was applied to select the number of respondents (final year Business Education students) used for the study. While accidental technique was employed to administer the questionnaire to the Business Education final year students that participated in the study. Four point rating scale researcher-made questionnaire was developed starting from Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD) to answer for items on classroom climate and instructional methods; and response options of Highly Acquired (HA), Acquired (A), Moderately Acquired (MA), and Not Acquired (NA) were used to answer for items on employability skills acquisition.

The questionnaire was validated by two (2) vocational educators and one (1) expert in measurement and evaluation. To guarantee the reliability of the instrument, the researcher conducted a trial test on 20 final year Business Education students in University of Uyo who were not part of the main study and data obtained were analyzed having Cronbach Alpha reliability estimates of .80, .81 and .87 for classroom climate, instructional methods and employability skills acquisition respectively. The researcher together with two trained research assistants visited the institutions, obtained permission from the Heads of the Department before proceeding to the final year lecture halls to administer the questionnaire to the respondents. The four hundred (400) copies of the questionnaires were all administered and retrieved giving rise to a 100% return rate. Data collected were analyzed using simple linear regression statistical tool.

Table 1. Distribution of the population and sample of the study

S/N	Institutions	No. of Business Edu Students	
		Population	Sample (50%)
1.	University of Calabar	88	44
2.	Cross River University of Technology	264	132
3.	College of Education, Akamkpa	237	118
4.	College of Education, Obudu	211	106
	TOTAL	800	400

Sources: Records, HOD office Voc. Edu University of Calabar, 2014/2015 session
Exams and records office Business Education Depart. CRUTECH 2014/2015 session
Records, HOD Office College of Education Akamkpa 2015/2016 session
Records, HOD office College of Education Obudu 2015/2016 session

RESULTS

Hypothesis one

There is no significant influence of classroom climate on employability skills acquisition among Business Education students in tertiary institutions.

The independent variable is classroom climate while the dependent variable is employability skill measured continuously. To test this hypothesis, simple regression analysis was used and the result is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Simple Linear Regression Analysis of the influence of classroom climate on employability skills acquisition

Variable		R	R ²	Adj R ²	Std. Error
Classroom climate		.364 ^a	.132	.130	6.69501
Source of variation	SS	df	MS	F	Sig.
Regression	2717.427	1	2717.42	60.626	.000 ^b
Residual	17839.613	398	44.823		
Total	20557.040	399			

Table 2 showed that the correlation coefficient of the variable as .364 which implied that there is a weak positive relationship between classroom climate and employability skills among undergraduate. More so, the result showed that Adj R² = .130 which implied that the variation in the dependent variable (employability skills acquisition) can be accounted for by 13.0% of classroom climate. A cursory look at the Table also showed an analysis of variance result of (F= 60.626, p<.000). Since p (.000) is less than p (.05), this implied that even though the percentage contribution is small, the result showed that classroom climate significantly influenced employability skills among undergraduates. Hence the null hypothesis was rejected.

Hypothesis two

Instructional method has no significant influence on employability skills acquisition among students in tertiary institutions.

The independent variable is instructional method while the dependent variable is employability skill measured continuously. To test this hypothesis, simple regression analysis was used and the result is presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Simple Linear Regression Analysis of the influence of instructional method on employability skills acquisition

Variable	R	R ²	Adj R ²	Std. Error
Instructional method	.345 ^a	.119	.117	6.74450

Source of variation	SS	df	MS	F	Sig.
Regression	2452.714	1	2452.714	53.920	.000 ^b
Residual	18104.326	398	45.488		
Total	20557.040	399			

The result as presented in Table 3 showed that the correlation coefficient of the variable as .345 which implied that there is a weak positive relationship between instructional method and employability skills acquisition among undergraduate. More so, the result showed that $\text{Adj } R^2 = .117$ which implied that the variation in the dependent variable (employability skills acquisition) can be accounted for by 11.7% of instructional method. A cursory look at the Table also showed an analysis of variance result of ($F= 53.920, p<.000$). Since $p(.000)$ is less than $p(.05)$, this implied that even though the percentage contribution is small, the result showed that instructional method significantly influenced employability skills acquisition among undergraduates. Hence the null hypothesis was rejected.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Classroom climate and employability skills acquisition in tertiary institutions in Cross River State

The finding in this aspect of the study indicated that there is significant influence of classroom climate on employability skills acquisition among Business Education students in tertiary institutions. This could be due to the fact that the classroom environment plays a great role in the learning of the child. The classroom can make or mar the potential abilities of the learner acquiring the rightful skills that would be relevant in the society. Where the classroom climate is tensed, full of fears and panic that the learner cannot ask or answer questions as well as relate with other during training or practical sessions, it would hamper the learners chances of acquiring the right knowledge and skills that are needed for effective functioning. This is because important elements in a positive classroom climate include a sense of respect, security and safety, engagement and humor needed for great learning.

Classroom climate acts its role by influencing organizational processes such as problem solving, decision making, planning, communication, coordination and controlling, motivation, and so on. Consequently, climate becomes a modifying force that can enlarge or reduce the effects of the organization's investments and operations and influence organizational outcomes. Situational realities influence the climate, but they also influence the organization's results of different kinds.

The result was in line with that of Adesomu (2008) whose study was on classroom variables and vocational skills acquisition among students in colleges if education in Lagos state. The result of the study showed that classroom variables such as class size, class facilities and classroom climate influences employability skills acquisition among students. Similarly, Alberta (2005), the school and classroom climate have a significant impact on student behaviour and achievement. Important elements in a positive classroom climate include a sense of respect, security and safety, engagement

and humour. Adelman and Taylor (in press) noted that classroom climate sometimes is referred to as the learning environment, as well as by terms such as atmosphere, ambience, ecology, and milieu. The impact of classroom climate on students and staff can be beneficial for or a barrier to learning.

The finding is supported by Krull (2014) who stated that as education becomes more inclusive, teachers need to become more aware of how to organize groups of students and how the students are arranged can lead to a favourable environment. Well-organized classrooms are an important component to classroom functions as it leads to more dialogue and formative assessment much has been written about creativity in recent years as an essential constituent of the real life that allows personal growth and the development of culture and society. In the era of globalization it has been linked to its twin innovation since creativity brings new ideas, whereas innovation deals with practical application of them.

Instructional method and employability skills acquisition in tertiary institutions in Cross River State.

The finding in this respect indicated that instructional facilities significantly influenced on employability skills acquisition among Business Education students in tertiary institutions. This could be due to that fact that instructional method is the vehicle that delivers the content of the subject and the skills that are expected to be communicated to the students. The choice of the methods to use matters a lot. Where the teacher utilizes participatory method of instruction or better still excursion method in delivery the content of instruction to the students, it would provide them with practical knowledge of the subject matter and help them achieve maximally in their academic engagement. For example, students who are taught with the computer that the teacher allows them to sit in the computer, allows them also to send and receive mails through the net, there is every tendency that they can acquire the skills directly rather than using theoretical approaches. This may help students better than when taught with teacher centered method. The findings corroborates with that of Dasmani (2011) that revealed that most TVET graduates attributed their unemployment to a number of factors including out dated and irrelevance in some parts of the curriculum, non-exposure to entrepreneurship education, practical subjects not well taught due to the absence of laboratory and inadequate practical demonstrations, teacher centered method of instruction, obsolete equipment and materials in short supply

The findings were in with that of Anindo (2016) whose study was on institutional factors influencing acquisition of employable skills by students in public technical and vocational education and training institutions in Nairobi County, Kenya. The main purpose of the study was to investigate the institutional factors influencing acquisition of employable skills by students in TVET institutions in Nairobi County, Kenya. Four objectives guided the study: to establish the influence of academic qualification of TVET teachers on acquisition of employable skills, establish the extent to which availability of training equipment influence acquisition of employable skills, establish the influence of teaching methods on acquisition of employable skills, establish the influence of adequacy of TVET teachers on acquisition of employable skills. The study adopted descriptive survey design. The study targeted three TVET institutions in Nairobi County. The key study findings were that teachers had prerequisite academic qualification to teach in TVET institutions, the TVET teachers do not have any professional development program or industrial attachment, academic qualification of teachers' influences acquisition of employable skills by students.

There is inadequate provision of training equipment, institutions do not have modern equipment that are relevant to those used in the industries, relevance of training equipment influences acquisition of employable skills, workshops were not well equipped, teachers mainly use lecture, demonstration, work based learning and discussion teaching methods due to large class sizes, inadequate training equipment and their influence on skills acquisition, the institutions have inadequate teaching staff hence are forced to hire part-time teachers or merge classes in order to complete syllabuses. The study concluded that the five institutional factors investigated significantly influenced the employable skills acquired by students.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that instructional methods adapted by the teacher and classroom climate significantly influenced employability skills acquired by students in tertiary institutions in Cross River State, Nigeria.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made:

- i. Classroom climate should be positive and tension free in order for students and teacher to benefit from instruction in the class.
- ii. The teacher should always utilize practical method of instruction that can help the students concretize what they learn and apply it in real life situation as learnt.

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