ASSESSMENT OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS AMONG BUSINESS EDUCATION STUDENTS IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN EKITI STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The study examined the information technology employability skills of tertiary institutions Business Education students in Ekiti State. The descriptive survey research design was adopted for this study. The population was 500 Business Education students out of which 100 final year were sample using simple random sampling technique. A self-design 23-item questionnaire titled 'Information Technology Employability Skills of Business Education Students' was used to collect data for the study. The instrument was constructed on 4-point scale. The instrument was validated by two experts. The reliability of the instrument was established using split-half method and its coefficient was 0.79. The research questions raised were answered using mean scores and standard deviation and hypotheses formulated were tested using t-test and ANOVA at 0.05 level of significance. Any item with a mean score greater than or equal to 2.50 suggests agreed and any mean below 2.50 suggest disagreed. The study revealed that Business Education students in College of Education, Ikere Ekiti and University of Nigeria, Nsukka Ikere campus possessed information technology skills required for employability. The result further shows that there is significant difference between College of Education and University Business Education students in the possession of information technology skills. The study also revealed that there is a significant difference in information technological skills possessed by Business Education student based on the areas of specialization. The study concluded that Business Education students have required information technology skills for employability. The study therefore recommended that Business Education Department should be more equipped with information technology facilities to enable students acquire more Information technology skills before graduating and Business Education programme should be promoted by government and all stakeholders in the field of Education.

KEYWORDS: *Business Education, Information Technology, Employment, Employability, Skills.*

INTRODUCTION

According to Brown and Hesketh (2004) employability is the relative chances of getting and maintaining different kinds of employment. Employability not only depends on whether one is able to fulfill the requirements but also on how one stands relative to others within a hierarchy of job seekers. Kazilan (2009) opined that employability refers to a group of important skills instilled in each individual in order to produce productive workforce. According to Yorke (2008), graduates employability skills are personal set of understanding and personal attributes that make graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupation.

It has been a major concern of graduates what constitutes employability skills. This is because despite the cry of unemployment among graduates, employers of labour are complaining about the lack of availability of skilled workers. It seems that the skills possessed by graduates are different from what the employers want. In a study conducted by Dabalen and Oni (2000) as cited in Usoro (2010) discovered that graduates are poorly trained and unproductive on the job and that graduates have shortcomings in applied technical skills. Brown and Hesketh (2004) also stressed that there is a clear mismatch between individual's expectations of employability and the realities posed by the labour market.

Business Education is that aspect of the total education programme that provides the knowledge, skills, understanding and attitudes needed to perform in the business world as a producer and consumer of goods and services. Business education is a branch of vocation education which prepares students for the world of work (Arhueremu & Ojohwoh, 2013). It represents a broad and diverse discipline that is included in all types of education delivery system – elementary, secondary and post-secondary. Business education is education for and about business (Esene, 2012). It is training in business skills that will enable the students after graduating for university programme set-up their own businesses and run it successfully without failure (Okoro, 2013). Business Education includes education for office occupations, distributions and marketing occupations, accounting, business and teaching of entrepreneurial skills. Business education is a field of study that holds great promises of employment for its recipients. Nevertheless the graduates of business education have also been plagued with the woes of unemployment. They too, like their counterparts in other fields, are at lost regarding how to be gainfully employed despite the promises of employment offered to them by business education. It seems that those promises and the contents of what they were taught in schools are different from what is obtainable in the reality of the world of work. They find it difficult either to get paid employment or to establish their own businesses.

It appears that gaining employment has become increasingly difficulty as a result of the fact there are new demands in the labour market than it used to be. Today information technology has changed the tone of the labour market. It appears that employers of labour are today desirous of job seekers who possess the electronic office skills as well as those who can effectively use office technology and gadgets to discharge office functions. Based on the importance and the role of information technology skills in all sectors of the economy, both at the national and at the global level, most employers now recruit applicants with information technology skills.

In view of Arhueremu and Ojohwoh (2013), explained information technology as the acquisition, processing, storage and disseminating of vocal, pictorial, textual and numerical information by micro-electronic based combination of computerizing and telecommunication. Information technologies are now influencing every aspect of human life. They play salient roles in work places, business, education, and even entertainment. Information technology has brought a lot of changes in working conditions. According to Oduma and Ile (2012), there is virtually no vacancy in today's modern offices that the knowledge of soft skills is not required. Electronic office competencies for business education graduates are very critical. Soft skills remain the fulcrum and the basis upon which their activities and discharge of their functions in organizational offices revolve. Employers of labour are today desirous of job seekers who possess the electronic office skills as well as those who can effectively use office technology and gadgets to discharge office functions. Information technologies are now influencing every aspect of human life. They play salient roles in work places, business, education, and even entertainment. Information technology has brought a lot of changes in working conditions.

Also, rapid advancement in Information Technology has produced major changes in the ways in which businesses operate. Almost all businesses today use computers in their day-to-day operations. With the use of computers, business is conducted in a way quite different from that in which it was conducted in the past. Transactions are no longer recorded using pen and paper but are store in electronic media. The updating of records and files is done through computer programs. Modern organizational practices have

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broadened tremendously to include the challenging need of workers to adapt to the rapidly changing techniques, new equipment and work processes. In the past accountants spent several hours doing manual entries but that changed with the development of computer technology. This is why Oliver (2008) observed that since modern offices and organizations operate with and employ e-offices processes, only workers who possess electronic office operations skills will remain relevant.

It appears that the employability of business education graduates now depends a great deal of technology skills. In buttressing this point, Romney and Steinbart (2009) posited that an accountant has to know how to use the computer system and, more importantly, understand how transactions are recorded and updated to be able to ascertain the accuracy and reliability of the data. It is therefore important for business education students and graduates to possess information technology knowledge and skills relevant to their roles to provide competent and professional services. And thus it has become prerequisite for business education graduates to be knowledgeable in the use of information technology in order to gain employment and also maintain their employment.

Many graduates are without the required skills for them to get employed. They lack certain information technology skills which are required for gaining employments in today's world of technological advancement. These skills create a gap in their knowledge which should have been embedded in the curriculum used in the process of training them. Business education graduates by the nature of their programme ought to possess relevant information technology competencies for employability. They are supposed to be prepared with the right set of information technology skills in order to meet the needs of business organizations. Business education students should be trained to meet the market demands of their chosen occupations. The methods of instruction and the content of the curriculum should be looked into to find out if there are really developing in the recipients the prerequisite skills, knowledge and attitudes to be relevant and employable in a technologically dynamic society. However, research findings revealed that business education graduates are not competent in information technology skills (Ile & Okolocha, 2007).

As identified by literature the relevant information technology skills required of business education graduates include, among others the followings:

- Ability to make use of spreadsheets to perform accounting operations
- Ability to connect to the internet
- Ability to analyze data using computer
- Skills in using tele/video conferencing
- Ability to perform Cloud computing i.e. storing data online
- Ability to make use of word processing application software to input, retrieve and store information
- Ability to perform basic data processing
- Ability to key in data
- Ability to operate database to store data
- Ability to make use of e-mails to receive and send mails
- Ability to send and receive fax messages
- Ability to make use of power points for presentations
- Skills in the use of e-commerce to carry out business transactions online
- Ability to make use of e-business application to carry out e-banking
- Ability to make use of e-business application to carry out e-marketing
- Ability to browse the internet to retrieve information
- Ability to receive vocal messages using the internet
- Skills in the use of data security software to protect private information against unauthorized access. i.e. the use of passwords
- Skills in the use Telecommuting/tele-working
- Ability to conduct research using the internet
- Ability to key in figures in table, rows, columns, insert additional rows and delete where necessary
- Ability to identify cells, arrange, re-arrange, name or rename a cell
- Ability to cut, paste, save and retrieve information using the word processing package (Ohakwe, 2003; Chukwumezie, 2003; Olise & Ihimekpen, 2008; Okoro, 2013).

This study therefore seeks to determine the extent to which tertiary business education students possessed information technology skills required for employability. The study also determines the relationship between business education curriculum content and the information technology skills required for employment.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is anchored on human capital theory and job matching theory as its theoretical underpinning. The Human Capital Theory as cited by Becker (1994) argues that workers with higher skill levels receive higher compensation because they are more productive. Employee involvement may require workers with more general skills to perform more

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complex tasks, which might result in more rigorous selection and hiring criteria and increase the demand for and wages of more educated workers. New practices may also require more firm-specific skills, which would increase employer-provided training and wages as well.

Another theory adopted in this study was job-matching theory that argues that the main goal of education and training is to prepare graduates for the tasks they are going to perform on their jobs. The theory suggests that a mismatch between the required skills and the skills a graduate actually possesses has important consequences for productivity, wages and probability of getting a job. Therefore, the competency level required by employers must be equivalent with the competency level of the graduates. The required specialization for the job should be match to graduates' field of specialization. Job match also can be identified by the degree to which graduates are able to utilize the knowledge, skills and attitudes to the work context (Bernard, Veldhuis & Rooij, 2001).

This theory is used in the study as Business Education students should acquire appropriate and relevant trainings in preparation for their future employment after graduation. Employers will screen the applicants qualifications and chose them if they match the available jobs. Furthermore, employers will choose the most suitable candidates to avoid any expensive training cost later and probably the most suitable candidates chosen will be paid higher than the group without matching skills.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY
This study aims to determine:
(1)   The information technology skills required by Business Education Students for employment
(2)   The extent to which Business Education Students possessed the required information technology skills for employment
(3)   The difference between NCE and B.Ed Business Education Students in their possessed information technology skills
(4)   The difference in the possessed information technology skills of Business Education Students among the different areas of specialization in Business Education

RESEARCH QUESTIONS
The following research questions were raised for the purpose of this study:
(1)   What are the information technology skills required by Business Education Students for employment?

(2)   To what extent do students of Business Education possess the required information technology skills required for employment?
(3)   The difference between NCE and B.Ed Business Education students in their possessed information technology skills
(4)   Does area of specialization influence the information technology employability skills possessed by Business Education students in Ekiti State

HYPOTHESES
The following hypotheses were formulated for this study:
(1)   There is no significant difference between NCE and B.Ed Business Education students in their possessed information technology skills
(2)   There is no significant difference in the possessed information technological skills of students among the areas of specialization in the Business Education programme.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY
This study will contribute to knowledge in the area of information technology skills requires for employability of Business Education students in the era of technological advancement. Curriculum planners could make use of the findings of this study in designing the kind of curriculum that will prepare business education graduates for employment in the era of technological advancement. Information obtained can have impact on curriculum development and improve teaching and learning of Business Education by making it more relevant in the era of information technology.

METHODOLOGY
Descriptive survey design was adopted for this study. The population consisted of 500 Business Education Students in Colleges of Education and Universities respectively. The sample consisted of final year business education students of College of Education, Ikere-Ekiti and University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Ikere Campus. Simple random sampling technique was used to select 100 students from the different areas of specialization in Business Education, Accounting and Office Technology and Management. A questionnaire titled 'Information Technology Employability Skills of Business Education Students' was used to collect data for the study. The questionnaire was tested for reliability using split-half method and its coefficient was 0.79 which implies that the instrument was highly reliable. Four research

questions were raised to guide the study and two hypotheses were formulated. The data collected were analysed using mean, standard deviation, t-test and Analysis of variance ANOVA at 0.05 level of significance.

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Question 1: What are the information technology skills required by business education students for employment?

Table 1: Information Technology skills required by business education students for employment

S/N	ITEMS	Mean	St.D	Decision
1	Ability to make use of spreadsheets to perform accounting operations	3.04	0.85	Agreed
2	Ability to connect to the internet	3.36	0.79	Agreed
3	Ability to analyze data using computer	2.83	0.98	Agreed
4	Skills in using tele/video conferencing	2.56	1.08	Agreed
5	Ability to perform Cloud computing i.e. storing data online	2.57	0.95	Agreed
6	Ability to make use of word processing application software to input, retrieve and store information	3.01	1.03	Agreed
7	Ability to perform basic data processing	2.72	0.94	Agreed
8	Ability to key in data	2.60	0.94	Agreed
9	Ability to operate database to store data	2.61	0.96	Agreed
10	Ability to make use of e-mails to receive and send mails	2.86	1.03	Agreed
11	Ability to send and receive fax messages	2.72	1.01	Agreed
12	Ability to make use of power points for presentations	2.66	1.02	Agreed
13	Skills in the use of e-commerce to carry out business transactions online	2.49	1.03	Disagreed
14	Ability to make use of e-business application to carry out e-banking	2.45	1.04	Disagreed
15	Ability to make use of e-business application to carry out e-marketing	2.51	1.08	Agreed
16	Ability to browse the internet to retrieve information	2.95	1.03	Agreed
17	Ability to receive vocal messages using the internet	2.96	0.98	Agreed
18	Skills in the use of data security software to protect private information against unauthorized access. i.e. the use of passwords	2.74	1.06	Agreed
19	Skills in the use Telecommuting/tele-working	2.52	0.99	Agreed
20	Ability to conduct research using the internet	2.97	1.03	Agreed
21	Ability to key in figures in table, rows, columns, insert additional rows and delete where necessary	2.83	1.01	Agreed
22	Ability to identify cells, arrange, re-arrange, name or rename a cell	2.88	0.91	Agreed
23	Ability to cut, paste, save and retrieve information using the word processing package	3.24	0.92	Agreed
	Grand mean	2.79	0.99	Agreed

$\overline{X} \leq 2.50$ *indicate* **Agreed** *otherwise* "*Disagreed*"

The result presented in Table 1 revealed the necessary Information Technology skills required by business education students for employment. The mean responses in the table for item 1-12, 15-23 are greater

than 2.50. This indicated that many of the respondents agreed that the identified skills are necessary Information Technology skills required by business education students for employment. These skills include ability to; use spreadsheets to perform accounting operations, analyze data using computer, perform Cloud computing i.e. storing data online, make use of word processing application software to input, retrieve and store information, perform basic data processing, make use of e-business application to carry out e-marketing, browse the internet to retrieve information, conduct research using the internet, use data security software to protect private information against unauthorized access, and ability to cut, paste, save and retrieve information using the word processing package. The grand mean further confirmed that all the skills identified in the table are necessary information technology skills to possess by business education students in tertiary institutions.

Research Question 2: To what extent does students possessed the required information technology skills for employment in Business Education?

In analyzing the question, responses in the questionnaire on information technology skills for employment in Business Education were computed. To determine the extent in which students of business education possessed information technology skills for employment, the respondents were categorised into "high" and "low" extent. In the questionnaire, "High extent" was determined by adding the standard deviation to the mean (2.79+ 0.99 = 3.78) and "Low extent" was determined by subtracting standard deviation from the mean response (2.79 - 0.99 = 1.80).

The extent in which students of Business Education possessed information technology skills for employment is presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Summary of respondents on the extent to which students of business education possessed information technology skills for employment

Extent of ITS Possession	Frequency and Percentage
High	61 (61%)
Low	39 (39%)
Total	100 (100%)

Source: Field Survey, 2018

The result presented in Table 2 revealed that 61% of the students had high extent of information technology skills for employment and 39% had low extent of information technology skills. The number of those who possessed information technology skills in Business Education was high. The fact is that most students of Business Education possessed information technology skills for employment after graduation.

Test of Hypothesis

Ho1: There is no significant difference between NCE and B.Ed Business Education students in their possessed information technology skills.

Table 3: t-test analysis of difference between NCE and B.Ed Business Education students in their possessed information technology skills

Students	N	Mean	Std. Dev	Df	T. Cal.	T. Table	Inference
B.Ed students	50	3.36	0.797				
				98	2.733	1.960	Significant
NCE students	50	3.04	0.851				

P > 0.05 (Significant)

The result of analysis presented in table 4 revealed that there is significant difference between NCE and B.Ed Business Education students in their possessed information technology skills as t_{cal}(2.733) was greater than t_{tab} (1.960) at 0.05 level of significance. This makes null hypothesis one to be rejected. This means that Degree (B.Ed) students possessed information technology skills than NCE students of Business Education.

Ho2:   There is no significant difference in the possessed information technological skills of students among the areas of specialization in the Business Education programme.

Table 4: Analysis of variance ANOVA for difference between Area of specialization and the possession of information technological skills in Business Education

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F- Cal	F -Table	Sig.
Corrected Model	2.442[a]	2	1.221	1.707		.187
Intercept	878.562	1	878.562	1228.000		.000
Area of specialization	2.442	2	1.221	1.707	1.47	.187
Error	69.398	97	.715			
Total	996.000	100				
Corrected Total	71.840	99				

The result presented in table 4 above revealed the significant difference in the area of specialization and the possession of information technological skills in business education as F-cal (1.707) was greater than F-table 1.47 at 0.05 level of significance. This led to the rejection of hypothesis 3. This implies that there was significant difference between the area of specialization and the possession of information technological skills in business education.

In order to know students' area of specialization that possessed the highest information technology skill, a post hoc test was further carried out.

Table 5: Scheffe post hoc test showing area of specialization that possessed the highest information technology skill

(I) AREA	(J) AREA	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
BUS EDU	OTM	-.3475	.22578	.310	-.9088	.2138
	ACCT	-.3270	.19747	.259	-.8180	.1639
OTM	BUS EDU	.3475	.22578	.310	-.2138	.9088
	ACCT	.0205	.21273	.995	-.5084	.5493
ACCT	BUS EDU	.3270	.19747	.259	-.1639	.8180
	OTM	-.0205	.21273	.995	-.5493	.5084

Post hoct test in table 5 revealed that students who study OTM possessed the highest information technology skill as positive mean difference of 0.3475 and 0.0205 was observed against others disciplines. This was followed by Accounting and Business Education students.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The study revealed that business education students in Ekiti state are highly competent in the tested information technology skills required for employability. This proves that Business Education students in tertiary institutions in Ekiti state have developed high skills in information technology as a result of their study in Business Education. This means that there is a positive relationship between the Business Education curriculum content and information technology required for employability in today's labour market. This finding is contrast with the finding of Ile and Okolocha (2007) who found out that business education graduates are not competent in information technology skills.

The study also revealed that there is no significant difference in the possessed information technology skills of male and female Business Education students. This means that both male and female business education students possessed information technology skills. The study further revealed that there is significant difference between NCE and B.Ed business education students in their possessed information technology. This means that Degree (B.Ed) students possessed information technology skills than NCE students of Business Education.

There is no significant difference in the possessed information technological skills of students among the areas of specialization in the business education programme. Through this study it was

revealed there is a significant difference among the areas of specialization in Business Education in their possessed information technological skills. This means that even though students in some areas of specializations are more skilled in information technology than others, all the areas of specialization in Business Education have high competency in information technology. This is in line with Arhueremu and Ojohwoh (2013) who found that Business Education is still that aspect of the total education programme that provides the knowledge, skills, understanding and attitudes needed to perform in the business world as a producer and consumer of goods and services even in the era of technological advancement. Business education still prepares students for the world of work.

CONCLUSION

The study concluded that the Business Education students used for the study have required information technology skills for employability and this means that there is positive relationship between the Business Education curriculum content and the information technology skills required for employability. However, they still need to be more trained and exposed to different information technology facilities in order to be able to compete favourably with their counterparts in the global market.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:
1. Business Education departments in tertiary institution should be more equipped with information technology facilities to enable students acquire more IT skills before graduating
2. Training and exposure to information technology should be improved in all the areas of specialization that make up Business Education
3. Business Education should be promoted by government and all stakeholder as the kind of education that prepares students for the world of work even in the era of technological advancement

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