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**EFFECTIVENESS OF BUSINESS EDUCATION PROGRAMME AND THE  
DEVELOPMENT OF EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS OF BUSINESS EDUCATION  
STUDENTS IN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES IN LAGOS STATE, NIGERIA**

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**Abstract**

*It is of great importance for the educational system of any country to produce graduates that are self-reliant who are able to fit effectively into the world of work. Thus, the purpose of this paper was to assess the effectiveness of Business Education programme and the development of employability skills of business education students in public universities in Lagos State, Nigeria. Three hypotheses were formulated and tested at the 0.05 level of significance. Descriptive survey research design method was adopted for the study. The population of the study was 350 Business Education students from two public universities in Lagos State who were in 400 level and purposive sampling technique was used to draw the 80 sample size from the population. A four-point Likert rating structured questionnaire titled "Effectiveness of Business Education Programme on Graduates' Employability Skills" (EBEPGES) was employed to gather data from 80 respondents with a reliability coefficient of 0.85. Least Square Regression test statistics was used to test hypothesis one, while Person's Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) was used to test hypotheses two and three. Results from the findings revealed that business education curriculum content does not equip students with the required soft skills needed to excel in work environment, the integration of work place job requirement in the curriculum content will enhance the employability skills of Business Education students and that there is statistical negative significant relationship between Business Education instructional methods and students' employability skills in public Universities in Lagos State. Based on the findings, the study recommended that the work environment and school should be integrated and all the major soft skills required by employers should be included into the curriculum as this will serve as a*

*plus to the students when they eventually graduate to seek for job opportunities.*

**Keywords:** Business Education Programme, Employability Skills, Work-readiness, Self-reliance

### **Introduction**

Education is expected to equip individuals with necessary skills needed to excel after school. Universities produce huge number of graduates in different fields of study annually, but the high rate of unemployed graduates in the country is worrisome. Students need to be well trained and equipped with those skills that will make them stand out from others as employers are only ready to employ individuals who is ready to add value to the organisation. The rate of unemployment is alarming and one begins to wonder if graduates are well equipped in order to compete favourably with their counterparts such as business administrators, medical doctors, lawyers, accountants and engineers in the labour market.

Business Education programme is basically designed to prepare graduates to be self-reliant, competent, skillful, technically sound and knowledgeable in order to perform effectively and efficiently in the work place. Business Education students in tertiary institutions in Nigeria are supposed to be taught apart from the book knowledge those employability skills that are required by employers that will make them to be employed or better than another person seeking for the same position. Krishnan (2008, as cited in Tiwari, 2012) noted that Business Education is about facilitating learning of job-related behaviours in order to improve individual and corporate performance. The content of the programme curricula does not match with the purpose of the programme as the content of the curriculum is more theoretical than practical. Dike (2009) viewed Business Education curriculum as an educational process of action about opportunities for engagement of students to be educated in business and educational related discipline such as Educational Management and Administration and Entrepreneurship Education

Employability has in recent times remained the focus of government, employers, job seekers and educators as the labour

market is an arrangement that brings employers and job seekers together (Imeokparia and Ediagbonya, 2012).

In the view of Lowden, Hall, Elliot and Lewin (2011), while there are variations in the classification of employability, there is a wide understanding of what qualities, attributes, skills and knowledge constitute employability for graduates. Employers expect graduates to have technical and discipline competences and also to demonstrate a range of broader skills and attributes that include: team-working, communication, leadership, critical thinking, problem solving and managerial abilities.

Business Education programme is an important part of the general education which emphasizes on skills and competency acquisition (Okoli, 2010). It is that programme of study which encompasses education for office occupations, business, teaching, administration and economic understanding. One remarkable characteristic of Business Education programme is that its products can function independently as self-employed and employers of labour. As a result, there exists a broad spectrum of job prospects for products of business education even from the junior secondary level to the graduate level. Included in this spectrum are: teaching careers, entrepreneurship, office environment and vocational practices (Aquah, 2014).

There is need to consider the content of the curriculum as this can play a significant role in enhancing the employability of business education students. Young and Muller (2014) as cited in Hollis-Turner (2015) argued that in an age where there is a proliferation of expert occupations, the knowledge that underpins the professional curriculum is of particular significance.

Business Education is that aspect of educational programme designed to provide an individual with the needed practical business and vocational attitudes, understanding, knowledge, skills and values that will enable him or her function effectively in the society (Ubulom, 2006, as cited in Ubulom and Ogwunte, 2017). Business Education is a broad and comprehensive field of study whose instructional programme is endowed with the capacity to provide knowledge, skills, vocation and aptitude required to effectively

manage personal businesses and at the same time function in the economic system (Okoro in Ore, Hassan and Ogungbo, 2022).

It is the intellectual and vocational preparation of people for earning a living in the contemporary industrial and business environment. According to Aquah (2014), business education instructional programme comprises:

- i. The knowledge attitude and skills needed by all citizens in order to effectively manage their personal business and the economic system;
- ii. The vocational knowledge needed for entry level employment and advancement in a broad range of business careers.
- iii. General or basic knowledge and understanding of business essential for all persons regardless of age, occupation, profession, social or economic status.

Employability relates to personal attributes rather than technical skills (Okolocha, 2006). Shafie and Nayan (2010) defined employability skills as job readiness skills. Employability skills are classified as technical and non-technical skills. Keller, Parker and Chan (2011) stated that employability skills are classification of attributes and skills, in which attributes speak to non-skill related behaviours and attitudes, while skills refer to the ability to carry out a technical task. Employability is the possession of core-skill or attributes that a type of employer (discipline-linked, sector-related, company-type) specifies. Employability is not just dependent upon the labour market forces, but also on other factors like willingness, training, capacity, capability, mobility (skill enhancement) and functional flexibility (changing shifts, working beyond job description) (Misra and Mishra, 2011).

Soft skills play an important role in increasing the chances of the potential job seekers to get an employment. To Klaus (2010), soft skills guide individuals to use technical skills and factual knowledge effectively and these skills include self-awareness, trustworthiness, analytics, critical thinking, self-control, integrity and problem solving. These soft skills include but not limited to the following: honesty, analytical skills, thinking skills, team building, problem solving, self-management, resilient, interpersonal skills, a positive attitude, willingness to learn, leadership skills and communication skills. Harvey (2001) claimed that most definitions of employability elaborate on five

characteristics: the job type, timing, further learning, attributes on recruitment, and employability skills. However, Smith, Ferns and Russell (2014) identified six dimensions of employability which are called work-readiness: professional practice and standards; integration of theory and practice; lifelong learning; collaboration; informed decision making; and commencement-readiness (confidence to start a job in the discipline).

Graduate employability is multifaceted and encompasses academic performance, career management skills and labour market awareness. Graduate employability is the ability of graduates to secure jobs in the labour market, being equipped with most of the skills envisaged by the employers and the ability to participate and contribute to the knowledge economy by applying what they learned in higher education and this will as a result, improve their social standing and the country's economy. Being career resilient also increases one's level of employability, being able to adapt to the changing working environment given rise to by globalisation and technology and many factors like the political climate and the country's economy. Continuous learning and development and generic skills increase one's employability prospects ((Kelebogile, 2014).

Graduate employability is described as a blend of understanding, skillful practices, efficacy beliefs (or legitimate self-confidence) and reflectiveness (or metacognition) (Little, 2006). Pauw, Ooshuizen and Westhuizen (2008) asserted that many university graduates were not employed due to lack of soft skills and workplace readiness as many graduates at the commencement of their careers lack time management skills. These are some of the reasons advanced for failure of many university graduates in recruitment tests.

Business Education students are expected to be taught different skill from those of 20th century to the 21st century digital skills and Business Educators should be willing to upgrade their skills on regular basis so as to be able to impart those employability skills and knowledge to students (Ore, Hassan and Ogungbo, 2022).

Thus, Business Education should be able to equip students with an understanding of a business purpose, structure and how the business interconnects with society and the economy. It should impart skills that can be imparted through the educational system for the development of new, innovative plans (Lundstrom and Stevenson, 2001

as cited in Rahim, Abidin and Hardi, 2016). It has been claimed that integration of soft skills into the business curriculum promotes hiring of students in today's workforce (Glenn, 2008).

In the opinion of Shukla and Kumar (2017), soft skills play a crucial role in increasing candidates' chance of gaining meaningful employment. Technically, soft skills help to improve candidate's employability skills. Keller et al. (2011) were of the opinion that employability skills are a classification of attributes and skills, in which attributes speak to non- skill related behaviours and attitudes, while skills refer to the ability to carry out a technical task.

The role of stakeholders such as industry, community partners, government, and employers, whose input into curriculum is vital to ensure it remains relevant to the needs of employment markets is also very important in the design of business education curriculum content (Tran, 2015). The integration of soft skills into the business curriculum promotes hiring of students in today's workforce. This is in consonant with (Glenn, 2008 and Shukla and Kumar, 2017). As noted by Johnston (2011) and Clarke (2017) for Business Education programme to be effective, then work integrated learning activities must be meaningful, relevant, and intentionally integrated and aligned with university curriculum.

Employers today are looking for graduates not only with specific skills and knowledge but who also possess the ability to be proactive enough to see and respond to problems (Singh and Singh, 2008). Employers are searching for graduates who can add positive value to their organisation, those that possess good academic achievement and great soft skills such as good interpersonal relationship skill, effective communication skill, analytical skill, problem solving skills, adaptability skill and result-oriented skill. Therefore, business education curriculum content should incorporate lifelong learning.

The integration of work place requirement into Business Education programme is a sine qua non in ensuring the development of students' employability skills. In the opinion of Imeokparia and Ediagbonya (2012), most graduates are concerned about what constitutes employability skills. The skills possessed by graduates seem to be at variance with what employers want. Some employers have tried to outline some of these skills they want from job seekers.

Internship programmes or work-placements have been recognised as one of the most efficient strategies to close the gap between education and employment requirements. The contribution of internships cannot be ignored as it gives learning opportunities which improve the work choices, support students to develop initiatives, self-confidence and maturity and offer to prospective employees secure low-cost training (Sapp and Zhang, 2009; Raelin, 2011 and Asonitou, 2014). Work-integrated learning is an approach and strategy that integrate theory with the practice of work within a purposefully designed curriculum and these include: practicum, internship, professional practice, project-based learning, workplace learning, industry-based learning, cooperative education, fieldwork education, service learning, real world learning, university engaged learning, experiential learning, clinical placements, work experience and doctoral supervision with industry partners (Oliver, 2015). This is so because the curriculum lack proper integration of work place requirement, inadequate time frame is allotted to Student Industrial Work Experience (SIWES),

The appropriate usage of instructional methods by Business Educators during the instructional process will also contribute to the adequate understanding of instructional content. Atah and Abeng (2019) viewed instructional methods as educational approach for turning knowledge into learning. Instructional methods are the “how to” in lesson delivery. There is more than one method to use in training students. The methods used in any learning situation are primarily dictated by the learning objectives. In many cases, combinations of methods are used to intensify the learning experiences. However, for an effective teaching method, there is need for cordial relationship to exist between the teacher and the learner. In the opinion of Al-madani (2015), there should be a practical guide to promote the concept of relationship between the teachers and students. The author laid emphasis on the importance of student-teacher relationship as this will help motivate learning and academic success.

Most graduates are trained in their technical knowledge and not in soft skills and this ought not to be so as both skills are complementary in nature. Therefore, the effectiveness of Business Education programme on students’ employability skills will lead to: quality output through the production of graduates that are innovative and creative, production of graduates that can add value to



organisations, reduction in unemployment rate in the country, improve country image as graduates will be able to defend their certificate through their efficiency and effectiveness and boosting of the country's economy as more people are gainfully employed government tax revenue will increase.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Most graduates find it very difficult to fit well in the work place as they fail to carry out their tasks effectively and efficiently due to lack of generic skills that will make them thrive on the job and this has contributed to the worrisome high rate of unemployment in Nigeria. One of the causes of graduate unemployment is the inadequacy in Business Education curricula as it fails to effectively develop in students, skills that will make them employable. Irregular curricula review, poorly structured curriculum content and inappropriate instructional methods are the reasons why Business Education graduates lack employable skills.

To address the issue of unemployment and as part of government reform strategy, some programmes were introduced, the National Directorate of Employment (NDE) (1998), National Poverty Alleviation Programme (NAPEP) (2001), National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS), (2004), and recently the Bank of Industries (BOI) (2015) to train and provide loans for graduates to enable them to be self-employed and become employers of labour. However, most graduates still continue to be unemployed after graduation, due to lack of pre-requisite skills for work effectiveness in the work place.

There is therefore need for urgent review of the curriculum to inculcate those relevant aspects that will lead to the improvement of students' employability skills thus preparing them for the world of work. Therefore, this study investigated the effectiveness of Business Education programme on the employability skills of Business Education students in public universities in Lagos State.

**Hypotheses**

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance

- H<sub>01</sub>: Business curriculum content does not have significant effect on development of soft skills of business education students in public universities in Lagos State.
- H<sub>02</sub>: There is no significant relationship between integration of work place requirement in the curriculum content and business education students' employability in public universities in Lagos State.
- H<sub>03</sub>: There is no significant relationship between business education instructional methods and students' employability in public universities in Lagos State.

**Methodology**

This study adopted descriptive survey research design. The rationale behind this choice was that it explains how the behaviour of a set of integration of work place requirement into the curriculum content, and Business Education instructional methods as independent variables affects the Business Education students' employability skills development as dependent variable and that the variables were not manipulated

The population for the study comprised of all final year business education students from Lagos State University, Ojo and University of Lagos, Akoka with a total of 350 students. Simple random sampling technique was adopted to draw the sample size of 40 respondents from each institution which was a total of 80 respondents. The study employed an online four- point Likert rating scale structured questionnaire as the research instrument titled "Effectiveness of Business Education Programme on Graduates' Employability Skills" (EBEPGES). The questionnaire was divided into four sessions containing five items each relating to the objectives of the study. The responses were scored Strongly Agree (SA) 4, Agree (A) 3, Disagree (D) 2 and Strongly Disagree (SD) 1. The reliability of the instrument was tested using test-retest method with a reliability coefficient of 0.85 and the instrument was validated through face and content validity by an expert in the field of Business Education programme and after which the questionnaire was sent online via the WhatsApp group of the study

population with 98% response. Least Square regression was used to test hypothesis one, while Pearson's Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) was employed to inferentially test the formulated hypotheses two and three at the 0.05 level of significance.

### Test of Hypotheses

**H<sub>01</sub>:** Business curriculum content does not have significant effect on development of soft skills of business education students in public universities in Lagos State.

**Table 1: Showing effect of Business curriculum content on development of soft skills of business education students**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	21.965	.509		43.167	.000
Curriculum Content	-1.483	.077	-.911	-19.206	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Students Employability

Table 1 shows the result of regression analysis of the effects of curriculum content on the development of soft skills of business education students in public universities in Lagos State. The coefficient of curriculum content is -1.483 indicating a negative effect while the standard error is .077. Meanwhile the t value is -19.206. It was observed from the table that curriculum content significantly ( $t = -19.206$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ) predict changes in development of soft skills of Business Education students in public universities in Lagos State. Since the significant value ( $p = .000$ ) was less than 0.05, the null hypothesis was rejected and it was concluded that business curriculum content has a negative and significant effect on development of soft skills of business education students in public universities in Lagos State. This suggested that continuation of current curriculum content will affect students' employability negatively.

**Hypothesis Two:**

H<sub>02</sub>: There is no significant relationship between school-work integration in the curriculum content and business education students' employability in Public Universities in Lagos State.

**Table 2: Relationship between integration of work place requirement in the curriculum content and business education students' employability**

		Work Requirement and Curriculum Integration	Students Employability
Work Requirement and Curriculum Integration	Pearson Correlation	1	.983**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	78	78
Students Employability	Pearson Correlation	.983**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	78	78

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 2, shows the significant value ( $p= 000$ ) less than 5 percent significance level. The PPMC value of .983\*\* and significant ( $p= 0.000$ ) suggested that there was statistical significant relationship between integration of workplace requirement in curriculum and Business Education students' employability in Lagos State Public Universities. Since the P value of Pearson's Correlation was less than the benchmark of 0.05, the stated hypothesis was rejected and it was concluded that there was positive and significant relationship between workplace requirement in curriculum and business education students' employability in Public Universities in Lagos State.

**Hypothesis Three**

H<sub>03</sub>: There is no significant relationship between business education instructional methods and students' employability in public universities in Lagos State.

**Table 3: Relationship between business education instructional methods and students' employability in public universities in Lagos State**

		Students Employability	Instructional Methods
Students Employability	Pearson Correlation	1	-.991**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	78	78
Instructional Methods	Pearson Correlation	-.991**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	78	78

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Result in table 3 shows a significant value ( $p= 0.000$ ) less than 5 percent significance level. The PPMC value of  $-.991^{**}$  was significant ( $p= 0.000$ ) and suggested that there was statistical negative and significant relationship between Business Education instructional methods and students' employability in public universities in Lagos State. Since the P value of Pearson's Correlation was less than the benchmark of 0.05, the stated hypothesis was rejected and it was concluded that there was a negative significant relationship between Business Education instructional methods and students' employability in Lagos State public universities.

#### **Discussion of Findings**

From the findings, hypothesis one revealed that curriculum content predicted negative changes in students' employability. This was because respondents were of the opinion that business curriculum contents need to be restructured in such a way that it will incorporate those skills that are required by employers. It was also deduced that the curriculum content was deficient and out-dated. This finding is in agreement with Singh and Singh (2008) and Kamal (2006) that a graduate often leaves the university without sufficient soft skills and understanding which are necessary attributes for success in world of work.

Findings from the second hypothesis showed a positive integration of work place requirement in the curriculum content and business education students' employability in Public Universities in Lagos State. The findings showed that the integration of work place job requirement in the curriculum content will enhance the employability of students of Business Education in public universities in Lagos State. This is because when work place requirement is incorporated into the curriculum content, Business Education graduate will be more enlightened and prepared for the world of work. The finding supported Pauw, Ooshuizen, and Westhuizen (2008) study that many university graduates were not employed because they lacked soft skills and work place readiness. Thus, Business Education curriculum lacks the integration of workplace requirement with the employability skills needed to get job in Nigeria. Hence, improvement in the course content of Business Education programmes aligned with current requirement in the work place is likely to enhance students' development of employability skills in public universities in Lagos State. Finally, the result of hypothesis three showed that there was statistical negative significant relationship between Business Education instructional methods and students' employability in public Universities in Lagos State. This finding confirmed Al-Madani (2015) findings that the reason for students' weak academic standing and by extension lack of employability skills development was due to the weakness in the relationship between them and their instructors.

### **Conclusion**

The study examined the effectiveness of Business Education programme on the employability skills of Business Education students in public universities in Lagos State, Nigeria. The programmes available in Business Education in public universities in Lagos State were examined to determine their effectiveness in predicting students' employability in the future. From empirical findings, the current Business Education curriculum content does not enhance students' employability skills development. This showed that if the institutions do not review the current curriculum content to incorporate new ideas that can enhance the employability of students, unemployment might likely increase as more students would not find suitable job to do. Changes in the current curriculum content of Business Education

programme to reflect the requirement of employers of labour will enhance the students' opportunities of getting a suitable job after graduation.

In conclusion, curriculum contents of universities can enhance the students' skills development that can give them a passage to securing a job after school. Meanwhile, integration of such content with school work can further be advantageous to the students in securing them a suitable job. Lastly, the instructional methods operational in the universities also play a significant role in enhancing students' abilities and employability skills.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings from the study carried out, the following are hereby recommended:

- i. Business Education curriculum should be well-structured in such a way that technical and non-technical skills will be embedded into the curriculum content.
- ii. There should be synergy between the school curriculum and work place requirement so that students will be able to get first-hand information about what is expected of them from employers.
- iii. More time and importance should be given to the Student Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES).
- iv. The curriculum content of the programme should be both theoretical and practical based.
- v. Lecturers should adopt a learner-centred instructional method as this will provide a lifelong learning for the learners.

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