



Role of Business Education on Vocational Skills Acquisition among Secretarial Education Students in Universities in Rivers State

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Abstract.

This study assessed the role of business education on vocational skills acquisition among secretarial education students in Universities in Rivers State. Two research questions guided the study. The design was survey with a population of five hundred and thirty [530] secretarial education students and a sample size of three hundred [300] randomly selected from the population formed the respondents. Questionnaire was designed by the researcher based on the research questions and used for data collection for the study. The data collected were analyzed descriptively using mean and standard deviation. The study found out that some skills are needed by secretarial education students to become self-reliant after graduation such as communication, book keeping, problem solving skills among others.

Keywords; Education, Vocation, skills Acquisition, Secretarial Education

INTRODUCTION

Secretarial education is a vocational course of study offered in Universities that equips its graduates with practical, professional and entrepreneurial skills. It is also an aspect of vocational education programme that gives training and imparts necessary skills that will provide the recipients with the intellectual and professional background adequate for their assignment and makes the recipients adaptable to changing situations in the economy. It provides knowledge, skills, competencies and attitudes for would-be secretaries to function well in offices and also be self-reliant. Chukumezie [2001] noted that business education revolves around job skills that enhances employability and self dependency. Okolo [2001] also stated that business education provides beneficiaries with adequate skills, information and competencies needed to function well in office occupation.

Modern day secretaries are exposed to the use of information and communication technology [ICT] in their day to day training and working lives. According to Ekpenyoung [1995], a secretary is an executive assistant who possesses a mastery of office skills and demonstrates the ability to assume responsibility without direct supervision. He/she is expected to be initiative and of a good judgment in decision making.

Secretarial students are trained in the various applications of information and communication technology. Information technology has greatly changed the business environment and the teaching and learning methods in office technology education programmes. Ekpenyoung [1995] sees secretarial profession as remarkable as it appeals to men and women who have obtained post secondary education. The secretary often works with important people and the remuneration is always very attractive. However, the secretarial profession provides a challenging job after graduation from institutions of higher learning, because of changes in business technology. Ekpenyoung equally said that even with the advanced technology now in use in the developed countries like United Kingdom, United States of America, China, Japan and Australia there is yet to be found a good substitute for the secretary. However, it is also pertinent for the secretaries to acquire the necessary skills in order to meet up with the pace of technological changes noticed in work places. In line with this assertion, Okoli [2013] noted that skills are practical activities

which make one employable, self-reliant and relevant to the society. Okoli further stated that business education students must possess these business skills that are necessary to enable them start and finance their own business enterprises and market the products and services.

According to Ihebereme [2010] skills acquisition is the process of acquiring or gaining effective and ready knowledge in developing one's aptitude and ability in a particular field. Skill acquisition is meant to equip the students with more practical than theoretical knowledge on income generating skills. Mbionwu [2008] noted that when students are given adequate training in skills, they can be self-employed after schooling; hence they become active partners in both community and national development. For vocational skills acquisition to be effective, self-reliant and productive, it needs not be operated in a vacuum. It has to be hooked unto factors that will help learners and all stakeholders in vocational education to be practical in their approach. Vocational skills acquisition as defined by Okolo [1995] is all those experiences whereby an individual learns to carry on successful and useful occupation. Experiences in this regard could be organized and institutionalized or unorganized and haphazard. In support of this, Thompson [2002] stated that vocational skills acquisition is targeted at the development of human abilities in terms of knowledge, skills and understanding in carrying out the activities in the pursuits of his choice.

Vocational education programmes are designed to facilitate the development of the learner's skills, knowledge and attitudes needed for success in any occupation. It is a structured learning process that is practical oriented and learning outcomes are determined through overt practice. Such skills can never be acquired through theory or rote learning, it can only be achieved by doing and practice. Ehiamefor [1990] contends that vocational education is relating knowledge and skill to work environment. He went further to state that every area of specialization can be regarded as vocational if the ultimate objective is to provide the student with requisite skills to enable him function in a work situation.

In the school system today, the training received by learners in vocational education is quite different from what they will meet after graduation. In schools and colleges, emphasis on skills acquisition which is the hallmark of vocational education is an illusion. Teachers now turn the programme into a literary kind of education where only theoretical aspects of vocational education are taught to the disadvantage of the practical lesson. According to Odu [2001] for vocational skills acquisition to be effective the training should be fashioned in the same way, same operations using the same tools and machines in respect of the occupation being prepared. Agomuo [2002] stressed that the employability skills of prospective secretarial education graduates can be viewed as an important dimension of reflecting the degree to which an individual will be successful in his or her chosen occupation. He therefore stressed that it is essential that secretarial educators be aware of the importance of presenting a well rounded curricula to enable their students function effectively in all aspects of employment which has proven its great potentials in today's world. Vocational skills acquisition such as computer operating skills, book keeping skills, business and office management skill etc are part of the skills secretarial education graduates needs to acquire to prepare them for the challenges awaiting them after graduation from the university.

The curriculum design of any business education programme is dependent on the institutional orientation. For example, some institutions house their business education programmes under business studies while others focus more on business teacher training hence place the programme under vocational education. No matter the location of the programme, the basic thing is to structure the curriculum in such a way that it covers the requirements for universal recognition of the degree. Koko [2003] stated that the main goal of business education is to produce skilled manpower for industry, to produce teachers as well as to prepare people with requisite skills and competences as proprietors and managers of their own businesses. Similarly, Ulinfun [1992] noted that the goal of business education is to produce manpower with the requisite knowledge, skills and attitudes of harnessing other resources and bringing them into a co-operative relationship which will yield the goods and services demanded by the society.

National Policy on Education [1981] asserted that business education programmes is expected to produce graduates who can effectively teach all business subjects at the post primary levels of education and obtain gainful employment in the private and public sectors. In furtherance to the above philosophy, business education programme is supposed to equip its graduates with the necessary competencies to teach business subjects in institutions of learning, to produce graduates who will engage in professional

studies in business education and to produce strong advocates and promoters of viable industrial and business enterprises. Human relation skills, problem solving skills and innovative skills are among the skills identified by Ezenwafor and Olaniyi [2017] as part of the skills needed by secretarial education students. Basically, the business education curriculum in higher institutions comprises the following; general education, secretarial studies, general business, accounting, professional education, industrial work experience, teaching practice, consumer education and distributive education [Koko 2002].

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study was to identify the role of secretarial education on vocational skills acquisition among secretarial education students in Tertiary institutions in Rivers State. Specifically the study sorts to;

1. Identify the needed vocational skills for secretarial education students.
2. Ascertain the roles of business education in the acquisition of needed vocational skills among students of secretarial studies.

Research Questions

What are the needed vocational skills for secretarial education students?

What is the role of business education in the acquisition of needed vocational skills among students of secretarial studies?

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in two tertiary institutions in Rivers State namely Ignatius Aguru University of Education and Rivers State University. A descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. A total of five hundred and thirty [530] level three hundred [300] secretarial education students were in the two institutions 261 from Ignatius Aguru University of Education while 269 was from Rivers State University respectively. The sample size was three hundred [300] secretarial education students randomly selected from the two Universities in Rivers State. One hundred and fifty students were sampled from each school. The instrument for data collection was a well structured five point Likert rating scale questionnaire with each section eliciting responses to address the research questions posed in the study. Data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation with an acceptable minimum value of 3.00.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Needed vocational skills for secretarial education students

Table 1; Distribution of Respondents by vocational skill s needed by secretarial education students

Needed skills	Mean	SD	Decision
Computer operation	3.83	1.03	Accept
Book keeping	3.81	1.10	Accept
Business and office management	3.69	1.09	Accept
Computer networking	2.87	1.12	Reject
Communication	3.60	1.29	Accept
Information gathering	3.13	1.20	Accept
Risk management	3.66	1.10	Accept
Human relation	3.40	1.18	Accept
Innovation	3.77	1.10	Accept
Problem solving	3.81	1.05	Accept

Source; Field survey, 2017.

≥3.00 Accept

≤3.00 Reject

Data in table 1 showed the respondents mean responses to the vocational skills necessary for secretarial education students in Universities in Rivers State. The findings showed that computer operation had a mean value of 3.83, booking keeping 3.81, business and office management 3.69, computer networking 2.87, communication 3.60, information gathering 3.13, risk management 3.66, human relation 3.40, innovation 3.77 and finally problem solving 3.81. computer networking was rejected because the

respondents felt that it is not part of the needed skills of secretarial education students. The finding corroborates that of Ezenwafor and Olaniyi [2017] in their study titled rating skills needed by business education graduates for entrepreneurial development in southwest Nigeria. They noted that human relation, problem solving and innovation are part of the skills needed by secretarial education students.

Role of business education in the acquisition of needed vocational skills.

Table 2. Distribution of Respondents on the Roles of Business Education on Secretarial Skills Acquisition

Roles	Mean	SD	Decision
Enhances effective computer operation	3.13	1.20	Accept
Efficiency in book keeping	3.66	1.10	Accept
Helps in business and office management	3.40	1.18	Accept
Enhances computer networking	2.87	1.12	Reject
Enhances effective communication	3.77	1.10	Accept
Helps in information gathering	3.81	1.05	Accept
Enhances effective risk management	3.60	1.29	Accept
Identification of human relation skill	3.69	1.09	Accept
Been innovative	3.83	1.03	Accept
Been able to solve complex problems	3.81	1.10	Accept

Source; Field Survey 2018

≥3.00 Accept

≤3.00 Reject

Data in Table 2 showed the respondents mean responses to the roles of business education on secretarial education students in Ignatius Aguru University and Rivers State University. The findings showed that computer operation has a mean value of 3.13 , book keeping 3.66 , business and office management 3.40 , computer networking 2.87 , effective communication 3.77, information gathering 3.81, risk management 3.60 and finally human relation skills 3.69, The findings is in line with Koko [2003] in her book titled foundations of business education where she stated that business education is to produce skilled manpower for industry, to produce business teachers as well as to prepare people with requisite skills and competences as proprietors and managers of their own business.

CONCLUSION

From the findings, it was concluded that;

Business Education students actually require skills that could make them employable after graduation of which business education programme is designed to teach the students the skills.

Secondly, the needed skills are embedded in the curriculum, therefore, if the students are well taught they will excel in their careers.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were made;

1. That Government and the school authority should put in the necessary facilities to enable the students study well that way after graduation they will be able to put into proper use what they were taught in school.
2. That lecturers on their part should endeavor to impact the right knowledge into the students as that is one way students can be productive after graduation, since they may be practicing what they learnt for their daily living.

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