



Evaluation of Classes of Degrees Awarded to Business Education Graduates by Tertiary Institutions in Rivers State, Nigeria

***William J. Ubulom & Rhoda Asinye-Igoni**

**Department of Educational Foundations
Faculty of Education
Rivers State University
Nkpolu-Oroworukwo, PMB 5080
Port Harcourt, Nigeria
*will.ubulom@yahoo.com**

ABSTRACT

This study evaluated the classes of undergraduate degrees awarded to graduates of Business Education of Accountancy option by tertiary institutions in Rivers State, Nigeria. The study was for a ten-year period from 2009-2018, considering two of the institutions - Rivers State University (RSU) and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education (IAUE). The population for this study consisted of all graduates from the Department of Business Education in the two universities (IAUE and RSU) considered in this work, from 2009 to 2018. Data collection was done using primary and secondary sources. Census sampling technique was employed; and the data subjected to statistical analysis using both descriptive and inferential statistics, such as frequency, percentages, mean, standard deviation and t-test. It was found that the two tertiary institutions awarded four classes of degrees, namely second class upper, second class lower, third class and pass degrees to graduates of Business Education (Accountancy options) between 2009 and 2018. Majority of the graduates obtained second class lower and third class degrees. More students graduated with pass degrees than second class upper. RSU and IAUE Port Harcourt did not graduate students in 2009 and 2018 due to strike. Statistically, there was no significant difference in the classes of degrees obtained by the graduates in IAUE and RSU between 2009 and 2018 at probability level of 0.05, as the value obtained from calculation was less than the critical value in tabulation (i.e., $t\text{-cal} < t\text{-tab}$).

Keywords: Undergraduate, Classes of degrees, Business Education, Tertiary Institutions, Rivers State

INTRODUCTION

The overall development of a person is usually dependent on the level of education the person has been exposed to. This development is ultimately for the benefit of the person and society. The acquisition of appropriate skills, abilities and competencies that would enhance the chances of a person making positive impact on the development of the society has been referred to as education (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013). In a related vein, Fafunwa (2001) as cited in Puyate & Okwakpam (2011), said that education is what is bequeathed to young people, to enable them play beneficial roles and make meaningful contributions to society. Education could be formal or informal. Whereas the formal sector involves consciously organizing and handing down of a set of well-defined instructions to people, by those purposely groomed for the assignment of conveying knowledge to others in a well-planned manner within the defined boundaries of a school; the informal one does not require a structured curriculum. Formal education can be delivered at various levels including pre-primary, primary, secondary, and tertiary education. Tertiary education is acquired from high institutions like polytechnics and monotechnics, colleges of education and universities. It is concerned with meeting the students' career expectations and needs. Hence, Peretomode (2007) stated that education at the tertiary level is the foundation for the overall development of a nation.

In Nigeria today, there appears an apparent decline in the standard of education such that students turned into the labour markets can hardly fit into the current level of competition. Borisade (2013) in Agabi, Ezech & Ezemba (2013) attested to the fact that many scholars lament that standard of education has fallen drastically as a result of factors militating against the school system in terms of poor funding, poor management, negative attitude of students towards learning etc., which boils down to poor classes of degree obtained today by graduates. Arong & Ogbadu (2010) as cited by Akunne (2017) stated that despite the consciousness of the acclaimed bounties of education, especially its contribution to societal development, it is still very poorly funded in Nigeria. There has been infrastructure deficit in virtually all the public schools. Graduates today cannot meet up with job requirements since many establishments request for a particular class of degree with minimum of second class upper. Many universities today hardly produce graduates with first class and second class upper since some years back but rather produce second class lower and third class. As at 2010 and 2011, available information from the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) shows that only about 15% of candidates obtained first-class degree in the country. It was also reported that different universities in Nigeria today especially Government owned universities produce graduates with poor classes of degrees unlike the private universities which produce students with better degrees. This fact was attributed to either inadequate funding in the government owned universities or unusual award of marks by lecturers in the private universities.

In universities in Rivers State, students study various courses in different Faculties, of which the Faculty of Technical and Science Education (as it used to be known at the Rivers State University), now Faculty of Education is one. The Faculty of Technical and Science Education, which has just recently, in May, 2018, been changed to the Faculty of Education, was established in 1981, to cater for the educational needs of the State, in terms of capacity building and manpower development for industrial and educational requirements. The Faculty currently consists of the Department of Business Education, with options in Accounting, Marketing, Management and Office Management Technology; Department of Educational Foundation, with an option in Adult and Community Education; Department of Information and Library Science; Department of Vocational and Technology Education, with options in Agriculture, Building Technology, Electrical and Electronics and Mechanical; and Department of Science Education, with options in Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Mathematics and Integrated Science.

Undergraduate Business Education Degree programme commenced in 1981 at the Department of Business Education, Faculty of Technical and Science Education, (now Faculty of Education) Rivers State University (RSU), in line with the implementation of National Policy on Education in Nigeria to afford graduates the necessary training on how to achieve the objectives of employability and advancement in office, occupational, as well as teaching business subjects. Candidates who were admitted in that same year graduated in 1985 and, since then, for about thirty-three years now, the department has consistently produced graduates massively in the four areas of specialization, namely: accountancy, management, marketing and secretarial education.

However, from inception of the Faculty, because of the debilitating status of the teacher in Nigeria, there has been paucity of candidates seeking admission into the Faculty on their own volition. People are hardly willing to indicate disciplines in the Faculty as a choice of course of study in their applications. The implication of this is that only a small number of persons get admitted into the Faculty, so that admission quota or available admission spaces in the Faculty are hardly filled. For the Faculty to breakeven with admission and its attendant returns, candidates who are unable to secure admission in their original courses of choice are usually drafted to the Faculty and constrained to study education. So, the bulk of students in the Faculty are those who accepted the admission, not necessarily because they desired to study education, but because they just had to be part of university education and the Faculty had provided the avenue. This situation often influences the psychological disposition of the students and their overall academic performance, resulting in the usual lower classes of degrees obtained by graduates in the various departments.

When the candidates are eventually admitted and become students, the poor commitment of the government to education makes wholesome academic delivery somewhat inhibited because of unavailability of adequate teaching facilities. Unfortunately, however, Uwaifo (2012) had shown that most programmes in Nigerian universities that are practically inclined, are now taught only theoretically. To buttress the above, UNESCO (1990) as cited in Agabi, Ezech & Ezemba (2013)

reported a complete lack of synergy between the academia and industry, which further deepens the hollowness of the practical background of the student. The consequence of this is that the student is unable to relate theory and practical and, therefore, unable to fit into the requirements of the industrial operations. According to Emaikwu & Nworgu (2005), over the past ten years, the academic performance of students has been fluctuating due to the fall in standard of education in Nigerian Universities. They explained that some persons have attributed it to poor service condition of lecturers; inadequate supply of educational facilities and equipment; lack of motivation and incentives; poor staffing and admission of unqualified students into our Universities. It is against this background that this work seeks to carry out a comparative analysis of academic degrees of graduates in the Faculty of Technical and Science Education in Rivers State University between 2007 to 2016, with a view to ascertaining the actual performance status of graduates from these departments and the possible interplaying performance indices responsible for their output.

It is common knowledge nowadays that an average university graduate, aside from not being grounded in his/her chosen field, is pitifully unable to properly express him/herself and communicate his/her ideas to others. This probably might have caused employers of labour in Nigeria to feel that graduates from Nigerian universities are lacking in practical knowledge and can, therefore, not cope with the demands of practical-based industries (Ojedokun, 2012). Ojedokun explained that this is because less emphasis is placed on practical training compared to their knowledge in theory during their training programmes. The outcome of the above scenario is that multinational oil exploration companies operating in Nigeria, when advertising for employment to fill in vacant positions, always require applicants with first class and second class upper divisions for employment. For example, Total Nigeria PLC (2019), in its advert for massive employment recruitment for 2019, emphasized on the candidates applying for the vacant positions to possess Bachelor's Degrees with at least second class upper classification. In essence, there seems to be no place for graduates that fall in the second class lower division and below. The question now is: does it mean that graduates of second class lower division and below cannot gain employment in Nigeria workplace? Again, to gain post graduate scholarship the Nigerian graduate must possess at least second class upper division. In fact, the specification in the advertisement of the Nigeria Liquefied Natural Gas Limited for their 2019 postgraduate scholarship award was for just First Class. What then is the faith of business education graduates from tertiary institutions in Rivers State between 2009 and 2018? From the foregoing therefore, this study investigated the number and classes of degrees of graduates in Business Education from tertiary institutions in Rivers State, with a view to comparing the classes of degrees awarded by the tertiary institutions in Rivers State.

METHOD

This study was carried out in Rivers State. Rivers State is one of the 36 States of Nigeria and lies in the South-South geo-political zone of the country, with Port Harcourt as its capital and the largest city. It is bordered by Abia, Imo, Cross River and Bayelsa States. Rivers State consists of 23 local government areas with three (3) degree-awarding tertiary institutions, namely Ignatius Ajuru University of Education (IAUE), Rivers State University (RSU) and University of Port Harcourt (Uniport); but this study considered only two universities; namely, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education (IAUE), Rumuolumeni, Port Harcourt and Rivers State University (RSU), Port Harcourt, which had graduated students from Business Education Degree programmes within the period of 2009 and 2018 investigated. Comparative analytical research design was adopted in this study using the ex-post facto model, as the data used are already in existence and to be manipulated in any way. The data for this work were collected retrospectively from past academic records of graduates from the Department of Business Education of Ignatius Ajuru University of Education and Rivers State University from 2009 to 2018. The population of the study consisted of all graduates from the Department of Business Education in the two universities (IAUE and RSU) considered in this work, from 2009 to 2018. The sample size comprised of all the 4,664 students (i.e. 100% of the population), who graduated from the department of Business Education between 2009 and 2018.

The instrument used for data collection was the graduation/convocation brochures of Ignatius Ajuru University of Education and Rivers State University for the period from 2009 to 2018. This was obtained from the Examinations and Records Units of the Universities. The validity and reliability of past academic records of students who graduated from the Department of Business Education has

long been established and confirmed by the approval of the university Senate. Therefore, the tests that culminated in the award of degrees in the above named department are acclaimed to possess high validity and reliability, as they function as both achievement (which tells how much a learner has gained or learnt) and aptitude tests (where the classes of degree are used to predict the students' output in the labour market). The data collected was analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Frequency counts, means and percentages were used to answer the research questions, while t-test statistic was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 alpha level of significance.

RESULTS

Graduates' population distribution: The number of graduates of Business Education in all the options between 2009 and 2018, from the two tertiary institutions studied is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Population Distribution of Business Education graduates from IAUE and RSU between 2009 and 2018

| Department | Institution | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | Total |
|--------------|-------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|--------------|
| Accountancy | RSU | 0 | 26 | 54 | 48 | 10 | 56 | 60 | 60 | 49 | 70 | 433 |
| Accountancy | IAUE | 136 | 139 | 145 | 80 | 48 | 77 | 70 | 70 | 13 | 0 | 778 |
| Management | RSU | 0 | 57 | 48 | 41 | 48 | 73 | 92 | 202 | 199 | 141 | 901 |
| Management | IAUE | 50 | 50 | 111 | 77 | 47 | 51 | 63 | 85 | 104 | 0 | 638 |
| Marketing | RSU | 0 | 22 | 26 | 30 | 16 | 47 | 23 | 61 | 29 | 20 | 274 |
| Marketing | IAUE | 160 | 76 | 81 | 74 | 45 | 45 | 66 | 62 | 64 | 0 | 673 |
| Office Mgt | RSU | 0 | 98 | 17 | 3 | 3 | 34 | 32 | 46 | 11 | 18 | 262 |
| Office Mgt | IAUE | 63 | 139 | 145 | 80 | 48 | 77 | 70 | 70 | 13 | 0 | 705 |
| Total | | 409 | 607 | 627 | 433 | 265 | 460 | 476 | 656 | 482 | 249 | 4,664 |

The data in Table 1 was used to answer the research questions raised in the study – essentially relating to the classes of degrees obtained by the various options in the Department of Business Education, namely: Accountancy, Management, Marketing and Office and Information Technology. These questions were addressed by obtaining the mean values of the graduates from IAUE and RSU respectively. The results are presented in Tables 2 – 5; and the overall mean values of the classes of degrees between the tertiary institutions are presented in Table 6.

Table 2. Values of Class of Degrees Obtained in Business Education (Accountancy Option) in the Study Areas

| Institution | N | Value/Class of Degree | 1st Class | 2nd Class Upper | 2nd Class Lower | 3rd Class | Pass |
|-------------|-----|-----------------------|-----------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------|-------|
| IAUE | 778 | Mean | 0.00 | 5.60 | 30.50 | 28.60 | 13.10 |
| | | Percentage | 0.00 | 7.20 | 39.20 | 36.76 | 16.84 |
| RSU | 433 | Mean | 0.00 | 2.50 | 26.90 | 11.60 | 2.30 |
| | | Percentage | 0.00 | 5.77 | 62.13 | 26.79 | 5.31 |

From Table 2, the Department of Business Education (Accountancy option) of IAUE had no first class, but had second class upper, second class lower, third class and pass degrees, with mean values of 5.60, 30.50, 28.60 and 13.10 respectively; and RSU also had no first class (0.00) but had second class upper (2.50), second class lower (26.90), third class (11.60) and pass degree (2.30). Details are shown in Appendix 1-6. By percentage, 7.20, 39.20, 36.76 and 16.84% of IAUE graduates of Business Education (Accountancy option) obtained second class upper, second class lower and third class degrees respectively, while 5.77, 62.13, 26.79 and 5.31% of graduates of Business Education (Accountancy option) of RSU obtained second class upper, lower and third class degrees respectively.

Table 3. Values of Class of Degrees Obtained in Business Education (Management Option) in the Study Areas

| Institution | N | Value/Class of Degree | 1 st Class | 2 nd Class Upper | 2 nd Class Lower | 3 rd Class | Pass |
|-------------|-----|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|------|
| IAUE | 638 | Mean | 0.20 | 3.60 | 30.50 | 25.90 | 3.60 |
| | | Percentage | 0.31 | 5.64 | 47.81 | 40.60 | 5.64 |
| RSU | 901 | Mean | 0.00 | 3.00 | 53.10 | 29.60 | 4.40 |
| | | Percentage | 0.00 | 3.33 | 58.93 | 29.86 | 4.88 |

Table 3 shows that Management option in IAUE had first class with the mean value of 0.20 unlike RSU that had no first class. Also, Management option of IAUE graduated students with second class upper and lower, third class and pass degree classifications, with mean values of 3.60, 30.50, 25.90 and 3.60 respectively, while RSU had second class upper and lower, third class and pass degree graduates with mean values of 3.00, 53.10, 29.60 and 4.40 respectively. By percentage, 0.30, 5.64, 47.81 and 40.60 and 5.64% of graduates of business education (Management option) in IAUE obtained first class, second class upper, second class lower, third class and pass degrees respectively, while 3.33, 58.93, 29.86 and 4.88% of graduates in RSU obtained second class upper, lower, third class and pass degrees respectively without any first class degree.

Table 4. Values of Class of Degrees Obtained in Business Education (Marketing Option) in the Study Areas

| Institution | N | Value/Class of Degree | 1 st Class | 2 nd Class Upper | 2 nd Class Lower | 3 rd Class | Pass |
|-------------|-----|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|-------|
| IAUE | 673 | Mean | 0.10 | 0.90 | 13.00 | 10.50 | 3.00 |
| | | Percentage | 0.15 | 3.29 | 47.45 | 38.32 | 10.85 |
| RSU | 274 | Mean | 0.00 | 3.00 | 53.10 | 29.60 | 4.40 |
| | | Percentage | 0.00 | 3.33 | 58.93 | 29.86 | 4.88 |

Table 5. Values of Class of Degrees Obtained in Business Education (Office Management) in the Study Areas

| Institution | N | Value/Class of Degree | 1 st Class | 2 nd Class Upper | 2 nd Class Lower | 3 rd Class | Pass |
|-------------|-----|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|-------|
| IAUE | 705 | Mean | 0.10 | 0.52 | 26.50 | 26.40 | 12.40 |
| | | Percentage | 0.00 | 7.38 | 37.59 | 37.45 | 17.59 |
| RSU | 262 | Mean | 0.00 | 0.80 | 12.50 | 11.20 | 1.70 |
| | | Percentage | 0.00 | 3.05 | 47.71 | 42.75 | 6.49 |

In a related vein, from Table 4, the graduates of Marketing option in IAUE had first class with a mean value of 0.10 unlike those of RSU, which was 0.00. IAUE also had second class upper, lower, third class and pass degree graduates with mean values of 3.29, 47.45, 38.32 and 10.85 respectively, while those of RSU graduated with second class upper and lower, third class and pass degrees with mean values of 0.90, 13.00, 10.50 and 3.00 respectively. In percentages, 0.149, 5.20, 31.20, 52.01 and 11.44% of IAUE graduates obtained first class, second class upper, second class lower, third class and pass degrees respectively, against the 0.00%, 3.29, 47.45, 38.32 and 10.85% for first class, second class upper, second class lower, third class and pass degrees respectively for RSU

Table 6: Overall Mean Values of Classes of Degrees Among the Tertiary Institutions

| Institution | N | 1 st Class | 2 nd Class Upper | 2 nd Class Lower | 3 rd Class | Pass |
|-------------|------|-----------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|------------|
| IAUE | 2794 | 0.08±0.35 | 4.48±3.121 | 27.12±15.86 | 28.98±17.46 | 9.20±16.46 |
| RSU | 1870 | 0.00 | 1.80±2.58 | 26.38±27.10 | 15.73±20.11 | 2.85±5.13 |

There was no first class among the graduates of business education Department in RSU across the four options, accountancy, management, marketing and office management unlike those of IAUE with the mean value of 0.080 ± 0.35 (Table 6). The classes of degrees with the highest graduates were the second class lower and third class for IAUE and RSU with the mean values of 27.12 ± 15.86 and 28.98 ± 17.46 respectively for IAUE and 26.38 ± 21.10 and 15.73 ± 20.11 for RSU respectively (Table 6). The mean values of second class upper, lower, third class and pass degrees obtained by business education graduate in IAUE were consistently higher than that of the RSU. It was observed that, the classes of degree majority of the business education students in tertiary institution particularly IAUE and RSU graduate with were second class lower and third class (Table 6).

Hypothesis 1

There was no significant difference in the classes of degree obtained by graduates of Business Education (in the various options) of the two study tertiary institutions in Rivers State.

Table 7. t-test for Hypothesis 1(Accountancy Option)

| Institution | Mean | SD | N | DF | t-cal | t-tab | p-Value | Decision |
|-------------|-------|------|---|----|-------|-------|---------|----------|
| IAUE | 15.56 | 3.61 | 5 | 8 | 0.878 | 2.306 | 0.05 | Accepted |
| RSU | 8.66 | 1.12 | 5 | | | | | |

The t-test value showed that there was no significant difference in the class of degree obtained by graduates of Business Education (Accountancy option) of tertiary institutions in Rivers State at probability level of 0.05 at degree of freedom 8 with the t-cal value (0.878) higher than t-tab (2.306). Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected while alternative hypothesis is accepted (Table 7).

Hypothesis 2

There is no significant difference in the class of degree obtained by graduates of Business Education (Management option) of the tertiary institutions in Rivers State.

Table 8. t-test for Hypothesis 2 (Management Option)

| Institution | Mean | SD | N | DF | t-cal | t-tab | p-Value | Decision |
|-------------|-------|------|---|----|-------|-------|---------|----------|
| IAUE | 12.76 | 4.23 | 5 | 8 | 0.435 | 2.306 | 0.05 | Accepted |
| RSU | 18.02 | 2.92 | 5 | | | | | |

In order to test this hypothesis, the data collected were subjected to t-test and the results are as presented in Table 8. The t-test value showed that there was no significant difference in the class of degree obtained by graduates of Business Education (Management option) of tertiary institutions in Rivers State at probability of 0.05 and degree of freedom 8 with the t-cal value (0.435) higher than t-tab (2.306). Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected while alternative hypothesis is accepted (Table 8).

Hypothesis 3

There is no significant difference in the class of degree obtained by graduates of Business Education (management option) of tertiary institution in Rivers State.

Table 9. t-test for Hypothesis 3 (Marketing option)

| Institution | Mean | SD | N | DF | t-cal | t-tab | p-Value | Decision |
|-------------|-------|------|---|----|-------|-------|---------|----------|
| IAUE | 5.50 | 5.87 | 5 | 8 | 0.723 | 2.306 | 0.05 | Accepted |
| RSU | 18.02 | 2.92 | 5 | | | | | |

In order to test this hypothesis, the data collected were subjected to t-test and the results are as presented in Table 9. There is no significant difference in the classes of degrees obtained by graduates of Business Education (marketing option) of tertiary institution in Rivers State at probability level of 0.05 and degree of freedom of 8 with the t-cal value (0.723) higher than t-tab (2.306). Therefore, null hypothesis is accepted thus rejecting alternative hypothesis.

Hypothesis 4

There is no significant difference in the classes of degrees obtained by graduates of Business Education (Office management option) of tertiary institution in Rivers State.

Table 10. t-test for Hypothesis 4 (Office Management)

| Institution | Mean | SD | N | DF | t-cal | t-tab | p-Value | Decision |
|-------------|-------|------|---|----|-------|-------|---------|----------|
| IAUE | 13.18 | 3.08 | 5 | 8 | 0.242 | 2.306 | 0.05 | Accepted |
| RSU | 5.24 | 1.08 | 5 | | | | | |

In order to test this hypothesis, the data collected were subjected to t-test and the results are as presented in Table 10. The t-test showed that there was no significant difference in the classes of degrees obtained by graduates of Business Education (Office management option) of tertiary institution in Rivers State at probability level of 0.05 and degree of freedom of 8 with the t-cal value (0.242) higher than t-tab (2.306). Therefore, null hypothesis is rejected thus accepting alternative hypothesis.

Hypothesis 5

There is no significant difference in the classes of degrees obtained by graduates of Business Education (all options) among the two tertiary institutions (IAUE & RSU) in Rivers State.

Table 11. t-test for Hypothesis 5(IAUE & RSU)

| Institution | Mean | SD | N | DF | t-cal | t-tab | p-Value | Decision |
|-------------|-------|------|---|----|-------|-------|---------|----------|
| IAUE | 13.97 | 3.27 | 5 | 8 | 0.590 | 2.306 | 0.05 | Accepted |
| RSU | 9.352 | 1.37 | 5 | | | | | |

In order to test this hypothesis, the data collected were subjected to t-test and the results are as presented in Table 11. The t-test showed that there was no significant difference in the classes of degrees obtained by graduates of Business Education among the two tertiary institutions in Rivers State at probability level of 0.05 and degree of freedom of 8 with the t-cal value (0.590) higher than t-tab (2.306). Therefore, null hypothesis is rejected thus accepting alternative hypothesis.

DISCUSSION

Research question one to five sought to ascertain the classes of degree obtained by Business Education graduates (accountancy) of tertiary institutions in Rivers State. One major finding in this research is that Ignatius Ajuru University of Education (IAUE) awarded the five classes of degrees, first class, second class upper and lower, third class and pass degrees while Rivers State University (RSU) awarded only four classes of degrees without first class. This result corroborates the finding of Olajide *et al* (2015), who reported the five classes of degrees, first class, second class upper, lower, third class and pass degrees. It is also in line with that of Akunne (2017), who reported similar classes of degrees obtained by graduates of Business Education in a study. The dissimilarity between this research and that of Akunne (2017) is the fact that the latter compared classes of degrees obtained by undergraduates or students of chemistry from three universities in Rivers State, including University of Port Harcourt, while the former compared the classes of degrees obtained by graduates of Business Education in IAUE and RSU all in Port Harcourt.

A major finding in this research is the fact that majority of the Business Education graduates from the two institutions (IAUE and RSU) obtained second class lower and third class degrees considering the percentage. This result is slightly contrary to the finding of Olajide *et al* (2015), who reported that most of the graduates of Institute of Education of Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife obtained second class upper and lower against the second class lower and third class in this case. It was also discovered in this study that more people graduated with pass degree than second class upper. This finding is peculiar to other universities in Nigeria. The result of this finding is also contrary to the Press Association survey, analysing figures for 2015-2016 from the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA), that it is now more common to graduate with a first-class degree than a lower

second (2:2) grade - with 24% getting a first class compared to 21% getting a second class lower. The most widely awarded degree according to the Agency (HESA) was a second class (2:1), received by about 51%, which completely contradict the result of this finding.

It was also found out in this research is that there was no significant difference in the classes of degrees obtained by graduates of Business Education of tertiary institution in Rivers State in all the options studied. This observation is in complete disagreement with the findings of Akunne (2017), who reported significant difference in the classes of degrees obtained by students during the period or sessions covered in three different Universities studied.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, it is evident that there was significant difference in the classes of degrees obtained by graduates of Business Education in Ignatius Ajuru University of Education and Rivers State University, Port Harcourt. There was no first class in the Department of Business Education in Rivers State University, Port Harcourt within the period of 2009 to 2018, unlike Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Port Harcourt that produced first class in 2015 and 2016 respectively in Management and Marketing options. Furthermore, more students of Business Education graduated with third class and pass degrees than any other classes of degrees in both institutions.

Educational Implications

The implication of the findings of this study includes the following:

- i. An awakening of the consciousness of the management of the universities to the failure of students in Business Education to graduate with classes of degrees higher than Second Class Upper (2:1), as IAUE had just about just three (3) First Class graduates and RSU did not have any within the period reviewed. Most of the students graduated in the Second Class Lower and Third Class categories. This situation is not in the interest of the graduates and the universities, as industries are mainly disposed to short listing and recruiting persons who have excelled up to the First Class category. It will also diminish the image of the universities amongst industry players.
- ii. As a consequence of (i), the management of the universities need to formulate policies and strategies; and institute programmes to address whatever may be the shortfalls or shortcomings of the system or students responsible for the performances of graduates below the excellence mark of First Class degree category.
- iii. There is the need for standardization of the academic curriculum of the department, not only in terms of the documentations of the National Universities Commission, but in the provision of basic and standard facilities and equipment for teaching and learning; regulation of admission of students into the department and recruitment of lecturers for the programme.
- iv. The findings of this study, if properly adopted, will inevitably motivate stakeholders, like the government, school authorities, communities, non-governmental organizations and even the lecturers to strive to solve what has now featured as a problem for both the universities and the graduates. This is so because everyone actually has a stake in the system and the students; even the students are either their children or wards. It is worthy to note that a well skilled educated child/student will help to build the family, the community, the state and the nation at large.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings the following are hereby recommended:

1. There should be more training for the lecturers in the Universities to enhance better performance with respect to the class of degrees.
2. There should be adequate teaching facilities in the affected department for better delivery and performance.
3. Lecturers and other personnel should be promptly and adequately paid to avert strike and to motivate them to work for better performance.
4. The universities should properly screen those to be admitted to study Business Education.

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