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Abstract - This study investigated employers assessment of effective communication competencies possessed by university Business Education graduates for successful running of businesses in south south Nigeria. One research question and three hypotheses guided the study. The study adopted descriptive survey design. The population comprised 318 employers of Business Education graduates in Rivers State and Delta State. The population also served as sample since it was manageable. The instrument for data collection was a 20 item questionnaire whose face and content were adequately validated by experts. The instrument internal consistency was determined using cronbach alpha, which has reliability of 0.93. The research question data were analyzed using mean and standard deviation. Z-test was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The finding of the study revealed among others that Business Education graduates are competent in ability to speak clearly with empathy, ability to display good listening skills, ability to interpret message correctly, ability to relate information appropriately to concerned parties. However, they are not competent in ability to formulate points of view and ability to meet the functional needs of the media. It was recommended among others that university Business Education graduates should constantly undergo training and retaining on communication courses to be more competent in all communication skills, more business communication courses should be built in business education curriculum to enable the students acquire more com-munication competencies.

Keywords : *assessment, communication competencies, university business education graduates, south south nigeria.*

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Abstract - This study investigated employers assessment of effective communication competencies possessed by university Business Education graduates for successful running of businesses in south south Nigeria. One research question and three hypotheses guided the study. The study adopted descriptive survey design. The population comprised 318 employers of Business Education graduates in Rivers State and Delta State. The population also served as sample since it was manageable. The instrument for data collection was a 20 item questionnaire whose face and content were adequately validated by experts. The instrument internal consistency was determined using cronbach alpha, which has reliability of 0.93. The research question data were analyzed using mean and standard deviation. Z-test was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The finding of the study revealed among others that Business Education graduates are competent in ability to speak clearly with empathy, ability to display good listening skills, ability to interpret message correctly, ability to relate information appropriately to concerned parties. However, they are not competent in ability to formulate points of view and ability to meet the functional needs of the media. It was recommended among others that university Business Education graduates should constantly undergo training and retaining on communication courses to be more competent in all communication skills, more business communication courses should be built in business education curriculum to enable the students acquire more communication competencies.

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I. Introduction

Business Education is the sum total of the knowledge, skills and attitudes that are required for the successful promotion and administering of business enterprise (Atakpa & Ilen, 2008). Similarly, Osuala (2004) stated that Business Education is a programme of instruction which consists of two parts: Office education, which is a vocational programme for office careers through initial refresher and upgrading of education and general business education, which is a programme that provides students with information competencies which are needed by all in managing personal business affairs and in using the services of business. Business Education therefore prepares youths for vocations and also furnishes them with relevant information concerning their lives both as citizens and as individuals. It also develops in them certain skills, attitudes and abilities that are relevant to securing jobs in the business world. Secondly, it gives them insight into general business and acquaints them with general business information that will make them efficient and rational purchasers and consumers of goods and services.

Ekpenyong and Ojo (2008), have listed the major goals of Business Education as: adopting the various business concepts acquired in class to real life situation, acquiring skills and competencies required for the performance of basic jobs, for example, taking simple administrative decisions and dealing with correspondence, keeping simple records of financial and other transactions in the office, playing productive roles in a free enterprise economy. Business Education programme at the university level has a well articulated curriculum encompassing accounting, management, office technology and management and marketing. Business Education students are also exposed to many communication courses in their programme. The purpose is that after graduation, Business Education graduates will be able to use the knowledge and skills in running their own businesses effectively without failure. Ukor (2007) opined that communication is the transfer of message to another party that it can be understood and acted upon. Hence communication is an integral aspect in Business Education curriculum since businesses fail if communication is faulty.

The bedrock of human activities and existence is communication. Communication brings people together, keeps people together and ensures that individuals and groups understand one another (Enudi, Okagbare & Akpere, 2008). Communication, is the transfer of ideas or knowledge in ways that enable the recipient to understand, react to and act upon the information received. Communication is transmission of information, which can take many forms like a face to face conversation, telephone calls, letters, reports, tabulations and so on. Similarly, Ukor (2008) defines

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communication as the process of conveying information from one person or group of persons, departments or organizations to another through the post, telephone, a messenger service or by other means which include transmission of memoranda, reports, instructions, minutes of meetings, invoices, orders, estimates, drawings and so on. Business Education graduates are expected to possess some relevant competencies in communication after graduation since they are exposed to some courses in business communication. These skills will help them to run their businesses successfully without failure.

Competencies is used to imply the possession of power, knowledge, attitudes and facts necessary for accomplishing tasks (Okwuanaso and Achilike, 2001). Competencies therefore are the knowledge, skills and behaviours that enable an employee to meet an established performance criteria. Enete, Amusa and Eze (2009) viewed competencies as essential knowledge and skills obtainable in a profession and those which the professionals in the field must possess and be able to demonstrate at optimal level of acquisition and functioning. Quality service or job can only be rendered when one has the knowledge, competencies and attitude required in the profession. To attain these skills, the individual or persons need to acquire basic training or knowledge levels related to the assignment or task to be performed whether through formal training or a combination of both. The training (formal or informal) process gives rise to human capacity development. To acquire the necessary skills required for effective communication, presupposes that you must understand the basic knowledge of language skills. This is quite important because the knowledge of language skills, especially your language of use, is a prerequisite to the acquisition of communication skills.

The acquisition of appropriate communication skills offers the individual the unique strategy for a successful business venture. The individual in a business environment for example, should be able to communicate and render his services to consumers so that they would appreciate the content and value of the product as well as develop the measures of self-marketing for the product. But most importantly, communication skills are interrelated processes of human capital development. Skills development here, should be seen within the frame work of an individual's ability to write, listening, reading and communicate effectively within a given business environment. These skills empower the user to design set goals and enhance the individual's productivity and contribution to a given objective.

Enudi, Okagbare and Akpere (2008) outlined the following competencies in communication expected of Business Education graduates.

- Ability to convey ideas to people who do not necessarily understand a particular concept.
- Ability to be concise, confident and adaptable in presenting yourself and your ideas.
- Ability to take criticism and listen to conflicting views/ideas.
- Ability to conduct a productive meeting, either in a small or big group situations.
- Ability to effectively utilize a variety of modes or presentation, such as face to face conversation, written/spoken, public/private and group/individual, in any given environment.
- Ability to construct reasonable, logical arguments and to arrange evidence appropriately to support an argument.
- Ability to ascertain what information needs to be conveyed and thus provide what is requested.
- Ability to listen or read other's communications and comprehend.
- Ability to have a keen sense of audience awareness, including giving technical presentation to technical and nontechnical audience.
- Ability to write clearly and concisely.
- Ability to use language that is appropriate for both the topic and the audience in question.
- In the same vein, Okwuanaso and Agbamu (2010) identified the following communication competencies expected of Business Education graduates.
- Ability to speak clearly and with empathy.
- Ability to display good listening skills.
- Ability to interpret message correctly.
- Ability to relate information appropriately to concerned parties.
- Ability to formulate points of view.
- Ability to remain calm, confident and composed under pressure.
- Ability to operate a computer/fax machine.
- Ability to operate telephone banks.
- Ability to operate radios, walkie talkies and cameras.
- Ability to listen to the target audience.
- Ability to meet the functional needs of the media.
- Ability to choose right media for sending information.
- Ability to pan thoroughly and carefully for all interactions.
- Ability to accept receiver as a legitimate partner.
- Ability to prioritize media outlets.
- Ability to use the right words at the right time.
- Ability to deliver a public speech.

Business Education graduates are expected to have possessed relevant skills and knowledge in these areas of communication to avoid business failure and run businesses effectively. There are complaints that university business education graduates seem to lack effective communication competencies for successful running of private businesses (Ukor, 2008).

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II. Statement of the Problem

Inadequate communication competencies causes more controversy in business and industry than any other single factor. Communication deteriorates as corporate enterprise or business organizations get bigger. The public and private sectors of the economy employ thousands of people and the consequences are that lines of communication are over stretched; organizational structures become cumbersome; communication becomes increasingly remote, impersonal and anonymous. Research findings by Ikelegbe (2010), Agbamu and Okwuanaso (2010) revealed that university Business Education graduates are not competent in communication skills. Business Education graduates seem to have difficulties in communication skills resulting to ineffective communication in their business ventures. The extent to which university Business Education graduates possess the relevant business communication skills can not be ascertained. The problem of the study is, to what extent do university Business Education graduates possess the relevant communication competencies to enable them run their private businesses successfully?

a) Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to assess effective communication competencies possessed university Business Education graduates for successful running of businesses in Nigeria.

Specifically, the objectives was to assess communication competencies possessed by university Business Education graduates expected for successful running of private businesses in Nigeria.

Research Question

The following research question was raised to guide the study.

To what extent do university Business Education graduates possess relevant competencies in communication?

b) Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

- There is no significant difference in the mean rating of male and female employers assessment of university Business Education graduates possessed communication competencies.
- There is no significant difference in the mean rating of Rivers State and Delta State employers assessment of university Business Education graduates possessed communication competencies.
- There is no significant difference in the mean rating of public and private employers assessment of university Business Education graduates possessed communication competencies.

III. Method

The design of this study was a descriptive survey. The population of the study comprised 318identified employers of Business Education graduates in Rivers State and Delta State geopolitical zone in Nigeria in 2012. There was no sampling since the population in the zone was manageable. The instrument for data collection was a 20 – item questionnaire. It has two sections. Section A of the questionnaire has 3 items on demographic variable of the respondent (sex, sector, location). While section B has 17 items based on the research question. The questionnaire has a four point scale of Very competent (VC), Competent (C), Fairly competent (FC) and Not competent (NC). The content and face validity of the instrument was done by three experts in Business Education and two experts in Measurement and Evaluation. The instrument was also subjected to factor analysis before the final copy was written. In order to carry out the reliability of the instrument, the questionnaire was administered to 40 employers of Business Education graduates in Ogun State in south west geopolitical zone of Nigeria. The data obtained were analysed using cronbach alpha, which has a coefficient of 0.93. The data were analysed using mean and standard deviation. In analyzing the data, the response options in the questionnaire were weighted as follows: Very competent – 4points, Competent – 3points, Fairly competent – 2points, Not competent – 1point. A cut-off point of 2.50 was set to accept or reject items on the instrument. Mean above 2.50 shows competent, while less than 2.50 shows not competent. Z-test was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. If the calculated value (CV) is less than table value (tv) 1.96, the hypothesis is therefore retained, on the other hand, z-calculated (zc) which is above table value (tv), hypothesis is rejected.

IV. Result

a) Research Questions One

To what extent do university Business Education graduates possess relevant competencies in communication as perceived by employers?

Table 1 : Mean rating and SD of the employers assessment of possessed communication competencies of university Business Education graduates

N = 318

S/N	Aspects of communication competencies	Mean	SD	Remark
1	Ability to speak clearly with empathy	2.98	0.80	Competent
2	Ability to display good listening skills	3.07	0.83	Competent
3	Ability to interpret message correctly	3.01	0.74	Competent

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4	Ability to relate information appropriately to concerned parties	3.04	0.79	Competent
5	Ability to formulate points of view	2.48	0.88	Not Competent
6	Ability to remain calm, confident and composed under pressure	2.77	0.85	Competent
7	Ability to operate a computer/fax machine	2.86	0.71	Competent
8	Ability to operate telephone	3.00	0.78	Competent
9	Ability to operate radios, walkie talkies and cameras	2.64	0.86	Competent
10	Ability to listen to the target audience	3.03	0.80	Competent
11	Ability to meet the functional needs of the media	2.46	0.74	Not Competent
12	Ability to choose right media for sending information	2.71	0.88	Competent
13	Ability to pan thoroughly and carefully for all interactions	2.55	0.90	Competent
14	Ability to accept receiver as a legitimate partner	2.41	0.73	Not Competent
15	Ability to prioritize media outlets	2.77	0.98	Competent
16	Ability to use the right worlds at the right time	2.84	0.76	Competent
17	Ability to deliver a public speech	2.59	0.94	Competent
	Grand total	**2.66**	**0.76**	**Competent**

Table 1 contains seventeen (17) communication competencies. The mean scores of responses of the respondents show that they are competent in fourteen (14) aspects of communication. Ability to relate information appropriately to concerned parties (item 4) has the highest mean score of 3.04 and ability to accept receiver as a legitimate partner (item 14) has the lowest mean score of 2.41, follow by Ability to meet the functional needs of the media 2.46, follow by Ability to formulate points of view 2.48.

i. *Hypothesis 1*

There is no significant difference in the mean rating of male and female employers assessment of university Business Education graduates possessed communication competencies.

To test hypothesis 1, the mean values of the two groups were compared. The result of the comparison shows the z-calculated to be 0.863 at degree of freedom = 316 and p-value .05. The result of the computation is shown in table 2.

Table 2 : Z-test result of the difference on employers mean rating of communication competencies possessed by university Business Education graduates based on gender

Variables	N	Mean	SD	Df	z-cal	z-tab	Remarks
Male	198	52.11	12.50	316	0.863	1.960	NS
Female	120	50.40	13.03				

From the above table, the calculated z-value of 0.863 is less than the z-tabulated value of 1.960 at 316 degree of freedom and 0.05 level of significance. This means that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female employers assessment of university Business Education graduates possessed communication competencies. The null hypothesis, is, therefore upheld while the alternate hypothesis is rejected.

ii. *Hypothesis 2*

There is no significant difference in the mean rating of Rivers State and Delta State employers assessment of university Business Education graduates possessed communication competencies.

To test hypothesis 2, the mean values of the two groups were compared. The result of the comparison shows the z-cal to be 0.984 at degree of freedom = 316 and p-value .05. The result of the computation is shown in table 2.

Table 2 : Z-test result of the difference on employers mean rating of communication competencies possessed by university Business Education graduates based on location

Variables	N	Mean	SD	Df	z-cal	z-tab	Remarks
Rivers State	190	78.93	14.34	316	0.984	1.960	NS
Delta State	148	76.40	15.66				

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From the above table, the calculated z-value of 0.984 is less than the z-tabulated value of 1.960 at 316 degree of freedom and 0.05 level of significance. This means that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of Rivers State and Delta State employers assessment of university Business Education graduates possessed communication competencies. The null hypothesis, is, therefore upheld while the alternate hypothesis is rejected.

iii. *Hypothesis 3*

There is no significant difference in the mean rating of public sector and private sector employers assessment of university Business Education graduates possessed communication competencies.

To test hypothesis 2, the mean values of the two groups were compared. The result of the comparison shows the z-cal to be 0.984 at degree of freedom = 316 and p-value .05. The result of the computation is shown in table 2.

Table 2 : Z-test result of the difference on employers mean rating of communication competencies possessed by university Business Education graduates based on type of employers

Variables	N	Mean	SD	Df	z-cal	z-tab	Remarks
Rivers State	217	73.62	15.17				
				316	0.910	1.960	NS
Delta State	101	71.24	16.30				

From the above table, the calculated z-value of 0.910 is less than the z-tabulated value of 1.960 at 316 degree of freedom and 0.05 level of significance. This means that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of public and private employers assessment of university Business Education graduates possessed communication competencies. The null hypothesis, is, therefore upheld while the alternate hypothesis is rejected.

V. Discussion of Findings

The discussion is done according to the findings of the study. The finding was that university business education graduates are competent in 14 aspects of communication. Ability to speak clearly and with empathy, ability to display good listening skills, ability to interpret message correctly, ability to relate information appropriately to concerned parties, ability to remain calm, confident and composed under pressure, ability to operate a computer/fax machine, ability to operate telephone banks, ability to operate radios, walkie talkies and cameras, ability to listen to the target audience, ability to choose right media for sending information, ability to pan thoroughly and carefully for all interactions, ability to prioritize media outlets, ability to use the right words at the right time, ability to deliver a public speech. However, business education graduates are not competent in 3 aspects of communication. Ability to formulate points of view, ability to meet the functional needs of the media and ability to accept receiver as a legitimate partner. This study is consistent with Okwuanaso and Agbamu (2010) that business education graduates are expected to possessed the above relevant communication skills to enable them function effectively in the world of work. The result of the hypotheses revealed that, there is no significant difference in the mean rating of male and female employers assessment of university Business Education graduates possessed communication competencies, there is no significant difference in the mean rating of Rivers State and Delta State employers assessment of university Business Education graduates possessed communication competencies, there is no significant difference in the mean rating of public and private employers assessment of university Business Education graduates possessed communication competencies. This study is also consistent with EnudiOkagbare and Akpede (2008) earlier identified these communication competencies expected of Business Education graduates.

VI. Conclusion

Business Education graduates require relevant communication competencies to enable them succeed in their entrepreneurial ambitions. Therefore, basic communication competencies are required of university Business Education graduates, fro employ ability and they should be competent in all aspects for effective job performance.

VII. Recommendations

The recommendations are suggested for the study.

- University Business Education graduates should constantly undergo training and retaining on communication courses to be more competent in all communication skills.
- More business communication courses should be built in business education curriculum to enable the

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students acquire more communication competencies.

- Adequate communication gadget should be provided by University authorities for teaching and learning in Business Education.

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