

EDUCATING GRADUATES AND APPLICATION OF KEY LEARNT SKILLS IN JOB PERFORMANCE IN RIVES STATE

By

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Abstract

This study investigated skill-oriented education graduates of universities and the demand of labour market in Rivers State, Nigeria. Two research questions guided the study, while two hypotheses were tested. The study adopted descriptive design. The population of the study was 276 principals in senior secondary schools in Rivers State. A sample size of 187 principals were drawn for the study, comprising 152 male and 35 female principals who were selected from senior secondary schools in Rivers State. The stratified simple random sampling technique was used to select the respondents. The instrument used was a questionnaire titled 'Skill-Oriented Education Graduates of Universities and the Demand of Labour Market Questionnaire (SGUDLMQ)'. The instrument was validated and subjected to reliability test, and an index of 0.82 was obtained using test-retest. The data generated were analysed using mean and mean-set to answer research questions, whereas z-test statistics was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 alpha level. The findings of the study revealed that education graduates of universities in Rivers State applied pedagogical skills satisfactorily. The study further showed that education graduates of universities in Rivers State lack entrepreneurial skills. The recommendations made include that government should earmark adequate funds necessary to fast-track effective implementation of Entrepreneurship Education. This will go a long way in ensuring that entrepreneurial centres are properly equipped and effective in meeting set goals.

Keywords: Pedagogy, Knowledge, Entrepreneurship and Skills.

Introduction

Universities are designed to produce individuals with relevant abilities, knowledge, skills and expertise needed in various fields of human endeavours. They also produce different professionals, specialists and leaders for sustainable national development. In this view, university as a the custodian of cherished societal values and norms; it nurtures and transmits treasured professional ethics, education goals emphasized acquisition of

physical and intellectual skills necessary for individuals to become "self-reliant and useful members of the society" (Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN), 2014). Ganyaupfu (2013) observed that the acquisition of knowledge and certification is no-longer the major requirement for securing well-paid jobs, but competency in skills utilization towards desirable objectives. Principles and attitude as foundation for democratic and egalitarian society, in which fundamental human

rights and freedom thrives. These highlight the role of universities in the human mismatch on skills demanded in labour market and university output is antithetical to the attainment of national goals on higher education. Item four of the national objects on higher skill is the ability and capacity to do something well. Capacities and abilities are usually acquired or learned through systematic and organized effort involving pragmatic exercises and adaptive activities tailored to teach the learner to be able to perform complex tasks in areas of job functions, evolving ideas and solutions to problems and handling of human behavioural and attitudinal complexities. Studies have conclusively revealed that different types of skills can be learnt (Alani, 2003). This implies that employability and entrepreneurial skills can be taught by universities successfully. Keeping this in perspective, it has become expedient for universities to continue to modify their curriculum, delivery methodologies and assessment methods in a manner that is more responsive in meeting skill requirements of the labour market. This has become necessary, especially for education graduates who ought to acquire subject-knowledge and teaching skills necessary for effective knowledge transfer to the next generation.

Contemporary teaching environments require key skills that can be applied in different situational contexts of teaching. Skilled-oriented graduates are sound graduates who possess the disciplinary skills in addition to cognitive, social and other wide range of transferable skills that facilitate efficient task performance. Thus,

capital development and development accelerator. However, the current skilled-oriented education graduates are those graduates who have good communication and human skills, pedagogical skills, time management skills and contents skills (Polziehn, 2011).

Teaching is a goal directed exercise, thus, education graduates should possess lesson planning skills, and have the ability to use action verbs to state measurable learning objectives and expected behavioural outcomes. The task of fostering learning is the work of teachers. This is why they must be prepared adequately to deliver on this mandate. The science of acquiring and using different methods, strategies and skills to enable learners learn is known as pedagogy. More broadly, pedagogy is the term used to describe actions and inactive gestures teachers employ in classroom to effect permanent changes in the learner. Pedagogy is also defined as teaching skills teachers put to use and activities arising therefrom to permit students to acquire knowledge and subject-related competencies [Centre for the Use of Research and Evaluation in Education (CUREE), 2012]. Pedagogical skills in this context involves teachers' subject-subject knowledge and curriculum conversance, enabling beliefs, ideas and attitudes that supports understanding and workings of teaching and learning in classroom contexts (Millward & Timperley, 2010). These suggest that pedagogical skills include teachers' managerial skills in classroom organization, curriculum know-how, communication abilities, interpersonal skills, language sensitivity in usage,

gestures and dispositions that promote learning.

Peary (2014) contended that the foundation of teaching is knowledge of what to teach, having suitable content and appropriate instruments that will effectively support the teaching and learning properly. The instructional materials must not only support the content understudy, but also should be able to arouse the interest of learners and facilitate understanding. Aside from appropriate learning tools, the education graduate ought to have and know how to apply certain teaching skills such as set-induction, stimulus variations and use of examples, illustrations and questioning to motivate students and nurture their interest throughout learning session. Having studied the basis of education psychology, graduate teachers supposed to have the ability to recognize students learning problems and needs and able to meet them professionally (Igbozuruike, Ebunu & Onu, 2017). The graduate teacher ought to develop strategies for dealing with awkward situations in classroom settings. This however, may require flexibility in learning styles and mood switching to suit situations and responses. In furtherance of the above, graduate teachers are expected to have developed organizational and record-keeping skills during pre-service training, especially during teaching practice exercise. Above all, graduate teachers are expected to have in-depth knowledge of their discipline and able to speak the language of their field confidently.

Apart from pedagogical skills, graduate teachers are also required to acquire entrepreneurial skills during their pre-service university education. Entrepreneurship skills are those decisive skills entrepreneurs employ in the management of their businesses for profit maximization and customer satisfaction. These important skills are essential to succeed in any business venture and career; they include technical skills (operational know-how, communication skills, interpersonal skills, coordination, team skills and environmental scanning abilities), management skills such as goal setting and planning skills, decision-making skill, marketing skill, finance resourcing skill, motivation skill and negotiation skill (Igbozuruike&Okafor, 2017). These important skills could be intrinsic in some individuals; however, most of them can be learned or improved upon through Entrepreneurship Education (EE) and personal development.

Entrepreneurship Education (EE) is essentially the process of imparting the aforementioned skills and encouraging the students to put into practice the skills they have learned. It is therefore of no wonder that the National University Commission (NUC) had in 2007 mandated all universities in Nigeria to offer mandatory courses on entrepreneurship courses to all university students in the federation. This, according to NUC, is part of efforts directed at tackling the problem of graduate unemployment in Nigeria (Nwite, 2009). The quality of education, especially EE given to students has a deterministic effect on the quality of benefits graduates can derive from it

(Nwite, 2016). This is however, dependent on the quality of teachers teaching the courses, the availability of facilities and supports from government and other entities. In addition to the above, the experience of the university, functional mechanism for monitoring implementation, policy directions and follow up supports. Preliminary observations indicate that universities in Rivers State are offering entrepreneurial courses as required by NUC, however the quality of EE and required supports given to students seem insufficient for producing meaningful results. It seems that the various universities need to audit their EE programmes with a view to identifying areas of concerns and needs for both lecturers and students. This will provide baseline information for innovation and modification of existing programmes in order to improve the effectiveness of EE for national development.

There are considerable benefits arising from entrepreneurship education (EE). Oluwatayo, Adirika and Wodi (2014) opined the EE helps the students to perform better in not only academic performances and in business, but also helps universities to realize the objectives of tertiary education, enhance competitive advantage of the school and its graduates, as well as promotes efforts directed at reducing poverty in the nation. In addition, entrepreneurship education also helps education graduates to create jobs for themselves, improve individuals self-worth and financial status, encourages savings, investment and divestment for wealth creation. More importantly, EE helps to cultivate the right attitude and

behaviour suited for entrepreneurial exploits. In other words, EE helps students or graduate to turn their thoughts into action.

Aside from business environment, entrepreneurial skills such as creativity, innovation, interpersonal relation and organisational skills can also be applied in school environment to enhance school management to enhance students' learning outcomes. This suggests that teachers should be visionary, able to articulate how to structure and present lessons effectively to maximize students' comprehension and learning. An entrepreneurial teacher is that teacher who is alert and able to pick up new and useful ideas from his/her or students, with a view to nurturing the potentially profitable ideas in the students to fruition. In doing this, teachers must not overlook the ultimate goal of education, which is to develop and groom younger ones to become effective members of the society. In furtherance of the above, Olga (n.d) asserted that one of the overarching challenges of the university system is the task of defining essential skills and competencies expected from 21st century graduates. The scholar observed that skills like logical thinking, collaboration skill and information processing abilities are critical for efficient job performance in most industries. Hence, universities have to structure their curriculum and delivery method to agree with labour market skill requirements of education graduates in areas of pedagogies and entrepreneurship.

Statement of the Problem

Until recently, graduate teachers hardly seek for job, but the situation has changed. The contemporary education graduates will require decisive pedagogical and entrepreneurial skills to succeed in today's labour market. However, it appears that considerable number of education graduates not only lack teachings skills required for effective teaching in the schools, but also lack entrepreneurial abilities that could help them to become self-employed. Graduate teachers are obliged to apply the learnt skills to facilitate teaching and learning; however, a situation whereby a sizable number of secondary school students have continued to fail five key subjects required for admission into higher institutions call for explanation. It seems that the observable poor work behaviour and low commitment to duty on the part of some teachers who often come to school late may be contributory to the poor performance of students in external examinations, high moral decadence and youth restiveness in Rivers State. Having observed these, the researcher was bothered to find out whether recent graduate teachers who graduated from universities in Rivers State are applying pedagogical and entrepreneurial skills in the performance of their duties.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of the study was to find out the extent education graduates from universities in Rivers State are applying key learnt skills in the performance of their duties. Specifically, the objectives of the study were to;

1. Find out the extent education graduates applied pedagogical skills in teaching and learning in secondary schools in Rivers State.
2. Determine the extent education graduates applied entrepreneurial skills in teaching and learning in secondary schools in Rivers State.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study

1. To what extent do education graduates applied pedagogical skills in teaching and learning in senior secondary schools in Rivers State?
2. To what extent do education graduates applied entrepreneurial skills in teaching and learning in senior secondary schools in Rivers State?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested at 0.05 alpha level.

1. There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female principals on the extent education graduate applied pedagogical skills in teaching and learning in senior secondary schools in Rivers State.
2. There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female principals on the extent education graduates applied entrepreneurial skills in teaching and learning in senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

Methodology

The study adopted descriptive design. The population of the study was 276 principals in senior secondary schools in Rivers State. A sample size of 187 principals were drawn for the study, comprising 152 male and 35 female principals who were sampled from senior secondary schools in Rivers State. The stratified simple random sampling technique was used to draw the sample. The instrument used was a questionnaire titled 'Educating Graduates and Application of Key Learnt Skills Questionnaire (EGASQ)'. The instrument was validated and subjected to reliability

test, in which index of 0.82 was obtained using test-retest method. The instrument consisted of two sections; Section A was designed to elicit demographic data of the respondents, while section B included 19 questionnaire items structured to obtain responses from the respondents using Likert scale ratings of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD). The data generated were analysed using mean and mean-set to answer research questions at criterion mean of 2.50, whereas z-test statistics was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 alpha level.

Data Presentation and Results

Research Question One: To what extent do education graduates apply pedagogical skills in teaching and learning in senior secondary schools in Rivers State?

Table 1: Mean and mean-sets scores of male and female principals on the extent education teachers applied pedagogical skills in teaching.

	Description of Items (Pedagogical Skills)	Means of the Principals		Mean-sets	Remarks
		Male	Female		
1.	Your teachers take note of learners' distinct characteristics	3.01	2.94	2.98	High Extent
2.	Your teachers are good in classroom management	3.29	3.07	3.18	High Extent
3.	Your teachers motivate learners during lessons.	3.21	3.11	3.16	High Extent
4.	Your teachers have mastery of different teaching methods.	3.22	2.78	3.00	High Extent
5.	Your teachers have mastery of different teaching skills	3.12	2.59	2.86	High Extent
6.	Your teachers usually apply learner-centred teaching approaches.	2.99	2.51	2.75	High Extent
7.	They ensure that teaching is supported by technology.	2.97	2.89	2.93	High Extent
8.	Your teachers are guided by well-structured lesson plan during teaching.	3.01	2.94	2.98	High Extent
9.	Their teaching is driven by well stated objectives.	3.23	3.14	3.19	High Extent
10	They evaluate lessons based on stated objectives.	2.94	3.12	3.03	High Extent
	Grand Mean	3.10	2.91	3.01	High Extent

Table 1 above shows that principals accepted all the statement addressing the extent education graduates applied pedagogical skills. Hence, the grand mean-set of 3.11 is higher than the criterion

score of 2.50. This indicates that education graduates of universities in Rivers State applied pedagogical skills in teaching and learning to a high extent.

Hypothesis One: There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female principals on the extent education graduate apply pedagogical skills in teaching and learning in senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

Table 2: z-test analysis of the difference between the mean ratings of male and female principals the extent graduate teachers applied pedagogical skills in teaching.

S/No	Categories of Principals	N	Mean	SD	Df	z-cal.	z-crit.	Significant Level	Remark
1.	Male	152	3.10	0.83	185	-0.03	±1.96	0.05	Not Significant (H _o accepted)
2.	Female	35	3.12	0.79					

In table 2, the mean scores of 3.10 for male and 3.12 for female are closely related. Hence no significant difference existed between the mean scores. This was because, at 185 degrees of freedom and at 0.05 levels of significance, the z-calculated value yielded -0.03, which was by far lower than the z-critical value of ± 1.96 . Consequently, since no significant difference existed between the mean scores of male and female principals at

185 degrees of freedom and 0.05 significance level, and the calculated z-value was lower than the critical z-value, the researcher was constrained to accept the null hypothesis stated, and thus established that there was no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female principals on the extent education graduates applied pedagogical skills in teaching and learning processes in senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

Research Question Two: To what extent do education graduates apply entrepreneurial skills in teaching and learning in senior secondary schools in Rivers State?

Table 3: Mean and mean-sets scores of male and female principals on the extent education graduates applied entrepreneurial skills.

Description of Items (Entrepreneurial Skills).	Means of the Principals		Mean-sets	Remarks
	Male	Female		
Your teachers can be adjudge to be creative	2.63	2.51	2.57	High Extent
Your teachers can be adjudge to be imaginative	2.55	2.70	2.63	High Extent
Your teachers like breaking new grounds	2.83	2.95	2.89	High Extent
Your teachers like putting ideas to practice.	2.68	2.52	2.60	High Extent
Your teachers have alternative sources of income.	2.33	2.12	2.23	Low Extent
Your teachers cannot be unemployed.	2.52	2.55	2.54	High Extent
Your teachers are self-employed	2.49	2.03	2.26	Low Extent
Your teachers are employers of labour.	2.00	2.01	2.01	Low Extent
Your teachers manage retail outlet.	2.05	1.99	2.02	Low Extent
Grand Mean	2.45	2.38	2.42	Low Extent

In table 3 above is presented the mean and mean-sets of the principals on the extent graduate teachers applied entrepreneurial skills. The table shows that items 11, 12, 13, 14 and 16 were accepted, whereas items 15, 17, 18 and 19 were rejected by

the respondents. The grand mean-set of 2.42 is slightly lower than 2.50 criterion level, and therefore implies that education graduates in Rivers State apply effect entrepreneurial skills to a low effect.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female principals on the extent education graduates applied entrepreneurial skills in teaching and learning in senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

Table 4: z-test analysis of the difference between the mean ratings of male and female principals on the extent education graduates applied entrepreneurial skills.

S/No	Categories of Principals	N	Mean	SD	Df	z-cal.	z-crit.	Significant Level	Remark
1.	Male	152	2.73	0.67	185	0.25	±1.96	0.05	Not Significant (H ₀ accepted)
2.	Female	35	2.71	0.88					

In table 4, the mean scores of 2.73 for male and 2.73 for female are closely related. Hence no significant difference existed between the mean scores. This was because at 185 degrees of freedom and at 0.05 levels of significance, the z-calculated values of 0.25 were by far lower than the z-critical value of ±1.96. Consequently,

since no significant difference existed between the mean scores of male and female principals at 185 degrees of freedom and 0.05 significance level, and the calculated z-value was lower than the critical z-value, the researcher was constrained to accept the null hypothesis stated, and thus established that there was

no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female principals on the extent education graduates applied entrepreneurial skills.

Discussion of Findings and Implications

As already established, the findings of this study showed that recent education graduates of universities in Rivers State applied pedagogical skills satisfactorily. This was because they applied pedagogical skills in teaching and learning activities; this was because they considered the students' distinct characteristics during teaching and learning, managed their classroom properly, motivated learners during lesson deliveries and had mastery of different teaching methods and skills. Furthermore, the findings also showed that graduate teachers used learner-centred teaching approaches that are supported by technologies, well-structured lesson plans and well stated objectives that aligned with evaluation questions. These findings are in line with the findings of Ganyaupfu (2013) who stated that teachers ought to recognize individual differences and unique characteristics of their students. This was considered necessary because the knowledge of students' peculiarities will help the teachers to prepare their lessons appropriately and deliver same professionally, keeping in view their students' educational level and capacities vis-a-vis their learning needs in relation to the curriculum. Furthermore, this study is in consonant with Muzenda (2013) who reported that teachers' pedagogical skills are the highest influencer of students' academic attainment. These findings are not contrary to the views expressed by Oluwatayo et al (2014), who reported that

graduate teachers were rated high in pedagogical and didactic skill in terms of appropriate teaching methods, classroom management and organizational skills, lesson planning, prudent application of instructional materials and good communication abilities.

More so, the findings of this study is in accord with the assertion of Obumneme (2015), who remarked that teachers' lesson plans ought be guided by smart and measurable objectives as desired by the curriculum. These findings are in agreement with Izuagba(2009), who observed that lesson plans must have measurable objectives with which lesson delivery is evaluated to ascertain the extent such objectives are achieved. Furthermore, the findings of this study also aligns with the views of Igbozuruike (2016), stated that teachers need to know the various child development processes and associated psychological implications in a classroom setting, adding that taking cognizance of students' uniqueness and differences helps the teacher to deploy the right interpersonal skills or disciplinary measures that can be applied to encourage or correct deserving students in atmosphere that exude care and promote harmony. The findings of this study are further supported by findings of Ulug,Ozden and Eryilmaz (2011) who reported that 70% of teachers had and applied ICTs skills in classroom settings. In addition, the study revealed that female graduate teachers had and applied pedagogical skills more than their male counterparts; however the distinction was not statistically significant. This is of no surprise because both male and female

principals were in agreement that graduates teachers motivated learners during lessons and had mastery of teaching skills and methods, with the result that academic achievement of students was enhanced. This allusion is in line with the views of Biggs and Tang (2011), who observed that students gain academically when their teachers are pedagogically sound, particularly in subject competency, methodical know-how and good instructional strategies. This view is further shared by some members of the academia, as pointed by Oluwatayo et al (2014) who observed that academic performance of students is used as a yardstick for measuring the competency of the teacher or the school. In this views, the findings of this study therefore indicate that Faculties of Education of universities in Rivers State are actually rendering their services as required; this therefore tend to absolve the universities of complicity in the growing unemployment challenges being faced by education graduates in the state – a view that is contrary to the study of Afolabi et al (2014), who attributed the widening skill mismatch in the labour market to defective curriculum and implementation methodologies used by university lecturers.

The findings of the study showed that education graduates of universities in Rivers State lack entrepreneurial skills. This was because education graduates do not have alternative sources of income as most of them were neither employers of labour nor managers of retail outlets; this was because majority of principals were not self-employed. This finding is in agreement with Teneng (2016), who

reported that graduates lack employability skills because they were taught theoretically with little or no element of practicals, with the result that most university students becomes job-seekers on graduation. These findings are in accord with Nwite (2016) who reported that despite the implementation of entrepreneurship education in various universities in Nigeria, many university students were still being graduated without useful entrepreneurial skills. The scholar further reported that no significant relationship existed between students' exposure to entrepreneurship education and post-graduation job prospects.

On the contrary, the findings of this study partly contradicted Nwite (2016) who reported that entrepreneurship education helped education graduates particularly to become self-employed. Teneng (2016) reported that 80% of companies surveyed pointed out that entrepreneurial and computer skills were considered as key element of graduate competence. This was because entrepreneurial skills help workers to bring to bear in work processes, the right attitude and behaviour suited for entrepreneurial exploits (Agbo, 2011). This is perhaps rooted in the idea that entrepreneurship education inculcates the right attitude, knowledge and skills that enable individuals to translate thoughts into action and business. Admittedly, the capacity of entrepreneurship education to turn around the graduate unemployment condition in Nigeria is virtually not in doubt; however the problem seems to lie with implementation, particularly in areas of equipping entrepreneurial centres and employment of competent lecturers to

handle the practical courses in the universities (Nwite, 2016).

In addition, the study revealed that no significant difference existed between the mean ratings of male and female principals on the extent education graduates in Rivers State acquired and applied entrepreneurial skills in improving their economies. This findings indicates that universities may have failed in their attempts to contain graduate unemployment using entrepreneurship education; this is because both male and female principals were in accord that the entrepreneurship education the received during university studies did not produce the intended outcomes, particularly in area of helping them to establish their own business and in employing others. The factors blameable for these failures may be lack of good management of entrepreneurship education programme on the part of universities, poor funding of nation's universities and poor economic policies on the part of governments, as well of lack capital or initiatives on the part of the individual graduate among other factors. Whatever factor is the case, government, universities, students and other stakeholders should work together to ensure that entrepreneurship education programmes of universities achieve the set goals, which is largely centres on imparting into university students, useful skills that can help them become business owners on graduation.

Conclusion

The importance of imparting functional skills into education graduates has been enunciated and its application in Rivers State investigated. Based on the findings,

the study concludes that education graduates in Rivers State are competent in application of pedagogical skills. Based on this, this study further concludes that Faculties of Education in universities in Rivers State were not effective in implementation of Entrepreneurship Education programme.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made;

1. The government should earmark adequate funds necessary to fast-track effective implementation of Entrepreneurship Education. This will go a long way in ensuring that entrepreneurial centres are properly equipped and effective in meeting set goals.
2. Universities should ensure that Entrepreneurship Education permeates various aspects of the school curriculum; this should be supported with policies that will help graduates to transit to business owners on graduation.

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