

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE SKILLS AND BUSINESS GRADUATES' EFFECTIVENESS IN ORGANISATIONS

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Abstract

Unemployment among business education graduates is alarming particularly in the absence of significant industrial involvement and expected requisite skills. The study examines the emotional intelligence skills required by employers of business education graduates for effective performance in business organizations in Nasarawa State, Nigeria. The study adopted descriptive survey design. The population of the study was 2101 managers of large, medium and small scale business organizations. Proportionate stratified random sampling technique was used to select 316 respondents, which were all human resource managers. Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient method was used to establish the reliability coefficient and 0.80 was obtained. One research questions and one null hypothesis guided the study. The researcher administered 316 copies of questionnaires with the help of three research assistants, while 300 copies were duly completed and retrieved making 94% returned. The data collected was analyzed using mean and standard deviation, while ANOVA was used to test the null hypotheses. The findings revealed that emotional intelligence skills is required to a moderate extent. There is significance difference in the mean ratings of low, medium and high capital based managers on the extent of emotional intelligence skills required of business education graduates for effective performance in business organizations. Based on these findings, it was recommended among others that managers and curriculum designers should develop appropriate curriculum that will enable business education graduates improve their skills to enhance their performance. Managers of organizations should also support tertiary institutions by engaging the students in proactive industrial training activities so as to enable them imbibe and apply their skills creatively.

Keywords

Emotional intelligence, Business education, Employability skills and Performance.

Introduction and Problem Definition

In a challenging economy, the role of tertiary institutions is not only to produce graduates with specific area of specialization, but more importantly, to develop graduates employability skills that are most

demanding in 21st century (Lee and Tan, 2003). Skills have become increasingly important in the globalized world. Vocational and technical skills are essential, but employers are seeking applicants who can continue to learn and adapt; read, write and compute competently; listen and communicate effectively; think creatively; solve problems independently; manage themselves at work; interact with co-workers; work in teams or groups; handle basic technology, lead effectively as well as follow supervision (Abraham, 2006). These core skills for employability are both important to employers' recruitment and enhance an individual's ability to secure a job, retain employment and move flexibly in the labour market as well as engage in lifelong learning (Bowman, 2010).

Emotional intelligence (EI) is known as a type of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one's own and other's emotions, to discriminate among them, and to use the information to guide one's thinking and actions accordingly (De Janasz, Dowd, & Schneider, 2006). Emotional intelligence considers the likelihood that emotions play an important role in decision making, and considers how those emotions may affect individual performance in the workplace. Employers today are concerned about finding workers who do not only have basic academic skills like reading, writing, science, mathematics, oral communication and listening, but also higher order thinking skills like learning, reasoning, thinking creatively, decision making and problem solving. EI skills, variously referred to as non-technical, professional, key, core or generic skills are considered vital in enabling graduates to apply disciplinary knowledge effectively in the workplace. Similarly, the skills typically considered important in developed economies are team work, self-awareness, motivation, empathy, self-regulation, communication, self-management, and analysis and critical thinking (Jackson, 2013).

The above skills are no doubt invaluable to business education graduates. Uwameiye in Ediagbonya and Imeokparia (2009) defined business education as the development of appropriate knowledge, skills, attitudes and understanding required to fit into chosen occupations. There are certain skills that are particular to business education graduates namely, managerial skills, leadership skills and marketing skills. However, secretarial and accounting skills remain as relevant as ever before. The extent or degree to which business education graduate possesses these skills determines his/her relevance in the world of work. Besides, employers are also looking for employees that have personal qualities such as responsibility, self-confidence, self-control, social skill, honesty, integrity, adaptability and flexibility, team spirit, punctuality and efficiency, self-directed, good work attitude, well-groomed, cooperative, self-motivated and self-management. Therefore, it is the duty of educators to ensure that students are well-equipped with these skills in order to fit into jobs or employment upon graduation.

Statement of the Research Problem

Despite efforts by universities in equipping students with skills and knowledge, there is some evidence to suggest that graduates moving from higher education to the workplace in many developing economies do not meet industry expectations. Although the graduates are acknowledged as being sufficiently equipped with technical know-how, there is an agreement that they lack certain employability skills (Shury, Davies and Oldfield 2010). In today's competitive world, a degree is no longer a guarantee to employability unlike decades ago when enrolling in almost any degree program ensures a choice of employment offers in the graduating year. Employers asserted that graduates are deficient in transferable skills required of the workforce as a result of the unsuccessful development of their employability skills during their stay in the university. Skill deficiencies imply reduced productivity and organizational underperformance and are

likely to have an effect on the economy's ability to achieve sustainable growth and global competitiveness.

Although, effort has been made by Nigerian government to curb this problem through the introduction of Industrial Training Fund (ITF) 1971 and Student Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES) 1973, the problems still exist. Duoc and Mertzger (2006), states that for the past ten years, educators, employers and university administrators have been greatly concerned about the quality of graduates because those graduates have less demand in the labour market. Employers' complain that most of the graduates lack necessary skills needed to succeed at work and future career. The problem of this study therefore, is how effective business education graduates would perform with EI skills or requirement of EI skills by employers for effective performance in organizations. Accordingly, this study is anchored in two research questions. What constitutes emotional intelligence skills? Secondly, to what extent are emotional intelligence skills required by employers of business education graduates for effective performance in business organizations in Nasarawa State.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to ascertain emotional intelligence skills required by employers of business education graduates for effective performance in business organization in Nasarawa State.

Research Question

To what extent are emotional intelligence skills required by employers of business education graduates for effective performance in business organizations in Nasarawa State.

Research Hypothesis

There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of managers with high, medium and low capital base on emotional intelligence skills required by employers of business education graduates for effective performance in business organizations.

Review of Related Literature

Emotional intelligence (EI) stands for the way we understand our emotions but also those of other people as well as other people's feelings and sensations and mastering our own feelings by deliberate choice of words and actions, in order to achieve desirable result (Wilding, 2010). The concept of emotional intelligence was used by psychologists for the first time in the year 1990 to describe several emotional features: empathy, expressing and understanding feelings, controlling one's mood, independence, flexibility, being popular with peers, ability to solve interpersonal relations, perseverance, friendliness, kindness, and willingness.

Mayer and Salovey (1993) described emotional intelligence as the ability to perceive emotions accurately; appraise and express emotions; access and/or generate feelings when they generate thought; understand and express emotional knowledge, and regulate emotions to promote emotional and intellectual growth. Similarly, Goleman (1995), defined emotional intelligence as a set of capacities that include individuals knowing what they are feeling, knowing what others are feeling, managing those feelings in relationships, and using those feelings to motivate themselves. As the result of interviews of large group of ultra-high achievers, he discovered considerable differences in the level of their IQ, their

training and education, and their credentials. However he also determined that there were high levels of consistency in their ability to get along with others, their levels of motivation, and their self-discipline.

In line with the foregoing, Goleman (1995) proposed that while high levels of cognitive thinking enable individuals to get “into the game”, and to secure employment in the first place, the possession of “emotional skills allow greater progress at a more rapid rate” (Goleman 1995: 32). This proposition was highlighted by demonstrating that “people who are better in emotional intelligence get more out of being better” because they can recognize other people's abilities and assist them in using these to enhance performance and to develop harmony and congruent goals within the working environment (Goleman 1995).

Business educators need to provide students with the opportunities to understand and develop the skills that they will require to succeed in the working environment and educators “have the responsibility to provide their graduates with a strong foundation in both technical and emotional training so that they will be well-rounded individuals, and hence worthy employees, effective managers and dynamic leaders” (Abraham 2006: 74). One possible way in which students could be provided with the opportunity to develop these types of skills would be to cultivate the development of emotional intelligence within the accounting cohort by relevant assignments and class interactions.

According to De Janasz Dowd and Schneider (2006), Emotional Intelligence skill is comprised of six areas:

- a) Self-awareness- emotional awareness, accurate self-assessment, self-confidence, ability to recognize emotions and their effects on you and others.
- b) Self-regulation- self-control, trustworthiness, conscientiousness, adaptability, innovation, ability to manage disruptive emotions and impulses.
- c) Motivation- zeal, achievement, drive, commitment, initiative, optimism, and the ability to remain persistent in the face of adversity.
- d) Empathy- understanding others, service orientation, developing others, leveraging diversity, political awareness, the ability to read and respond to other’s feelings.
- e) Social skills - interacting smoothly, managing interpersonal relationships, handling emotional responses to others, influence, communication, ability to build bonds with others.
- f) Group work skills- collaboration and cooperation, team capabilities, conflict management, the willingness to work towards shared goals.

Emotional Intelligence has been found through research to be the single most important factor in determining a young person’s future success. This is the one area of intelligence which the individual has the ability to grow and develop through practice on a consistent basis. Goleman, (2000) identified emotionally intelligent leaders as having the ability to perform and achieve better by creating an EI environment, exercising EI competencies and molding an EI leadership style. The EI competency framework he outlined has four dimensions which consist of: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness and social skills (Goleman 2000). Emotional intelligence considers the likelihood that emotions play an important role in decision making, and considers how those emotions may affect individual performance in the workplace.

To be able to impact emotional intelligence to students, Muncy (2006) has proposed that there are a number of areas in which personal intelligences can be taught in the classroom. He suggested methods that would provide students with the opportunity to develop EI skills. This according to Muncy, (2006) would include particular learning tasks such as: Group projects, Mentoring projects, Journaling, Popular press assignments, Class presentation, Web-based instruction, Student-centered learning exercises, Gaming and Role-playing. It should be noted that Muncy (2006) suggested that one of the aims of a university education is to improve “a person’s ability to intellectually perform in a chosen field of endeavour”, and although his work was based in the area of marketing, his proposals for developing the interpersonal skills could also be incorporated in teaching of accounting

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored in Human Capital Theory. Schultz (1961) propounded Human Capital theory and later modernized by Becker (1964) in a book titled “Human Capital”. While pointing out that knowledge, skills and competencies are a form of capital, Schultz compared the acquisition of knowledge and skills to acquisition of the means of production. The difference in earnings between people relates to the differences in access to education and health. Becker (1964) on his own part viewed human skills and competencies as similar to physical means of production such as factories and machines. According to Becker (1964), human capital is skills and knowledge that individuals acquire through investments in schooling, on-the-job training, and other types of experience.

Becker’s (1964) definition suggested differentiating human capital along two distinct conceptualizations of human capital attributes: human capital investments versus outcomes of human capital investments and task related human capital versus human capital not related to a task. Human capital investments include experiences such as education and work experience that may or may not lead to knowledge and skills. The outcomes of human capital investments are acquired knowledge and skills. Task-relatedness addresses whether or not human capital investments and outcomes are related to a specific task, such as running a business venture. The distinction of different human capital attributes is important because it helps to (1) theoretically dismantle causes and effects of human capital attributes and to (2) theoretically derive moderators of the human capital - success relationship.

The relevance of human capital theory by Schultz 1961 and Becker 1964 to the present study is that education increases individuals’ productivity, which consequently enhances job performance. As such, business education provides graduates with employability skills and abilities relevant to job performance, and thus the more highly educated business education graduates are, the more successful they will be in the labour market in terms of both incomes and work opportunities (Yuzhuo, 2012). This theory does not lean much towards the acquisition of generic skills to succeed in the workplace. It focuses more on the educational knowledge acquired through higher education to be successful in work. Human relation functions cannot be applied in the workplace if one has the technical or theoretical knowledge of it, but the point is, one does not apply them in the air, one deals with people because that is the nature of the human relation profession, one will need both set of skills for success.

Related Empirical Studies

Al-Mutairi, Naser and Saied (2014) carried out a study on Emotional intelligence skills required of business education graduates. The purpose of the study was to explore factors considered by employers

when recruiting business graduates in Kuwait. Four categories of employability factors were used in the study covering graduates knowledge, soft skills, personal abilities and working with groups. The population of the study consisted of 400 Kuwait employers represented by managers of banks and companies. Survey research design was adopted for the study. Questionnaire was used for data collection. Mean and standard deviation were used for analyzing the research questions and t-test was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significant. Findings of the study revealed that participants attached highest level of importance to graduates knowledge, soft skills and personal abilities to work within groups.

Method

The study adopted a descriptive survey method. The population for the study comprised 2,101 with the help of proportionate stratified random sampling technique, 316 human resource managers of large, medium and small scale business organizations in Nasarawa State were utilized. A five point scale questionnaire varying from very high extent, high extent, moderate extent, low extent and very low extent were used to elicit information from the respondents. The instrument was given to three experts, one in Measurement and Evaluation Unit in the Educational Foundations Department and two in Vocational Education Department of the Faculty of Education all in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. By the use of test re-test method and Pearson Product Moment Correlation coefficient and 0.80 was obtained.

The administration and collection of copies of the questionnaire was done by the researcher through the help of three research assistants. Mean and standard deviation was the main statistical tool to analyze the data, while ANOVA was used to test the null hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance. Data relating to the research question: ‘to what extent are emotional intelligence skills required by employers of business education graduates for effective performance in business organizations in Nasarawa State?’ are analyzed and presented in Table I below.

Table I: EMPLOYERS’ MEAN RATINGS ON EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENT SKILLS AND BUSINESS GRADUATE’S EFFECTIVENESS IN ORGANIZATIONS IN NASARAWA STATE

S/N	Business Education Graduates require of Emotional Intelligence Skills:	Mean	S D	Remarks
1	Ability to Influence flexibility and loyalty.	3.72	0.64	HE
2	Stimulate personal growth of other people.	3.43	0.78	ME
3	Communicate self-confidence, flexibility and initiative orientation to people.	3.62	0.99	HE
4	Leadership ability.	3.83	0.87	HE
5	Innovate optimistic effort for developing and making use of diversity	2.52	0.88	ME
6	Change/adapt to situations	3.72	0.69	HE
7	Monitor trends and sense of entity’s policy networking ability.	2.53	0.78	ME
8	Co-operate with individual of diverse background	3.54	0.87	HE
9	Team-working ability	3.73	0.87	HE
10	Exhibit self-control in carrying out transactions	3.68	0.86	HE
Grand Mean		3.43		ME

Source: Field work 2015 by the author.

Results of data analyzed show that items 21, 23, 24, 26, 28, 29 and 30 on emotional intelligence skills listed are high extent and items 22, 25 and 27 required to a moderate extent by employers of business

education graduates for effective performance in organizations. The grand mean of 3.43 shows that on the whole, emotional intelligence skills are required to a moderate extent by employers of business education graduates for effective performance in business organizations. The standard deviations for all the items are within the same range showing the respondents are not wide apart in their ratings.

Statement and Test of Null Hypothesis

There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of managers with high, medium and low capital base on emotional intelligence skills required by employers of business education graduates for effective performance. The null hypothesis was tested using ANOVA and at 0.05 level of significance and the summary of the results are presented in Table 2. Summary of one – way analysis of Variance (ANOVA) for the mean of managers with low, medium and high capital base in Nasarawa State in their ratings of emotional intelligent skills and business graduates effectiveness in organizations

Table 2: SUMMARY OF ANOVA FOR THE MEAN OF MANAGERS WITH CAPITAL BASE IN NASARAWA STATE IN THEIR RATINGS OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENT SKILLS AND BUSINESS GRADUATES EFFECTIVENESS IN ORGANIZATIONS

Sources of Variance	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F-cal	F-tab	Inference
Between Groups	1337.385	2	668.692	8.670	3.02	Rejected
Within Groups	22907.495	297	77.130			
Total	24244.880	299				

Source: *Field work 2015 by the author.*

The result of the analysis in table 2 shows that the f-cal. (8.670) is greater than the F-tab. (3.02) at 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, there is significant difference in the opinions of low, medium and high capital based managers in their mean ratings on emotional intelligent skills required by employers of business education graduates for effective performance. The null hypothesis is therefore rejected.

Findings

1. Emotional intelligence skills are required by employers of business education graduates to a moderate extent for effective performance in business organizations in Nasarawa.
2. Low, medium and high capital based managers in Nasarawa State differ significantly in their mean ratings on the extent of emotional intelligence skills required by employers of business education graduates for effective performance.

The study revealed that emotional intelligence skills are required to a moderate extent for effective performance in business organizations. This finding is in consonance with the findings of Goleman (2000) which revealed that emotional intelligence skills such as self-awareness, self-management, social awareness and relationship skills are required of graduates (including business graduates) for success on the job. He pointed out that while high levels of cognitive thinking enable individuals to secure employment in the first place, the possession of emotional skills allow greater progress at a more rapid rate.

Emotional intelligence skills are identified as the ability and capability to perform and achieve better by creating an EI environment, exercising EI competencies and molding an EI leadership style (Goleman, 2000). To be adept at emotional intelligence skills like customer service or conflict management requires an underlying ability in EI fundamentals, specifically, social awareness and relationship management. Emotional Intelligence has been found to be the single most important factor in determining a young person's future success.

Conclusion and Recommendations

In the light of the findings of this study, it could be concluded that for effective performance of business education graduates in business organizations, generic skills, discipline specific skills, and career management skills are required to a high extent while emotional intelligence skills is required to a moderate extent. Therefore, it becomes imperative for business education students to be equipped with these employability skills to enable them gain employment on graduation and perform efficiently in their job role.

Based on the findings of this study, the three recommendations are made put forward. The first is that human resource managers and curriculum designers should develop appropriate curriculum that will enable business education graduates to enhance their performance. This will help to reduce unemployment rate. Secondly, Managers of organizations should support tertiary institutions by engaging in the students proactive industrial training activities so as to enable them imbibe and apply their skills creatively. Thirdly, Managers should continuously update themselves with the technological changes and new job skills in the market place and make it known to curriculum designers to ensure that relevant skills are regularly renewed, in order not to be obsolete.

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