

**Determination of the Relationship Between Competence Needs of Business Education Graduates and Employability Potentials in Rivers State, Nigeria**

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**ABSTRACT**

*The study investigated the relationship between competence needs of Business Education graduates and employability potentials in Rivers State. This study adopted a descriptive survey research design and the correlation research design. The population of this study consisted of 2,552 business education graduates from the period of 2015/2016 – 2018/2019 academic sessions. The sample size of 331 respondents was derived base on Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table of sample size determination. A self-structured questionnaire titled “Competency Needs and Graduate Employability Potentials Questionnaire (CNGEPQ)” was used as the yardstick to measure the relationship between competency needs of business education graduates and their employability potentials. The questionnaire was divided into two sections; A & B. Section “A” covered respondent’s demographic information while section “B” covered the instructions guiding the filing of the instrument and the items of the instrument. Section B was further divided into two sub-section; the Part I covered the items on the dimensions of competency needs, having three clusters – covering communication skill competence of 15-items, while the Part II covered the items on Employability Potentials, with three clusters – covering white-collar employment, blue-collar employment, and entrepreneurial engagement, with a total of 15-items. To obtain the reliability of the instrument, copies of the questionnaire were trial tested by administering it on 20 Business Studies graduates gotten from old students association of Madonna University Elele, Rivers State. Cronbach Alpha reliability method was used to analyse the data gotten from the administered instruments to the respondents, yielding a reliability coefficient of 0.88, which by implication was enough to adjudge the instrument as being reliable. Pearson’s Product Moment Correlation was used in the analysis of the data collected. The results from the investigation revealed results favouring white-collar employment need for the investigated competence needs of Business Education graduates among the respondents that participated in this study. The study indicated that there was strong and significant relationship between communication skill competence and white-collar employment of Business Education graduates. It is recommended that tertiary institutions in Rivers State offering business education need to be provided with up-to-date learning facilities that would aid the effective teaching of communication skills.*

**KEYWORDS:** Competence Needs, Employability Potentials, Business Education Graduates, Rivers State and Nigeria

## **Introduction**

Business education is an educational programme that prepares students for entry and advancement in jobs within business and teaches them to handle their business affairs as well as function intelligently as consumers and citizens in a business economy. Osuala (2004) defined business education as that aspect of vocational education that emphasises job competency, career preparation, and blue-collar employment. It involves the acquisition of special skills in business subject areas. Njoku (2006) defined business education as an educational programme that equips individuals with functional and sustainable skills, knowledge, attitudes, and values that would enable the individuals to operate in the environment they find themselves.

According to Ogbuzuru (2011), skill is the manual dexterity that is acquired through the repetitive performance of an operation, displaying expertness, practical ability, dexterity, and discretion. A skill is, therefore, a well-established habit of doing something. Jimah et al. (2011) also describe skill as goal-directed, well-organized behaviour that is acquired through practise and performed with an economy of effort. In the same vein, Speelman (2005) expressed skill as the ability to do something well, usually gained through training or experience. Skills are often acquired after a training session or after a practical activity. Consequently, this study covers three areas of business education graduate competency needs; they include: communication skill competence, quantitative skill competence, and technological skill competence.

Communication is the process that occurs between two or more people in which a message is delivered and received by the other party. Communication happens every day in the workplace, such as managers giving direction to workers, co-workers communicating to plan a project, and employees communicating information to customers. The ability to communicate is one of the employability skills necessary for a graduate's success in entering the workforce, as a job candidate with good communication skills could be selected (Crawford et al., 2011). According to Pope (2015), communication skills are the skills that direct, control, and understand the future organization's goals. Through effective communication skills, everyone in the organisation will have the same understanding and perspective when working towards the vision and mission of the organization. Various studies report the ability to communicate as very beneficial for both employees and organizations (American Management Association, 2010; Morreale & Pearson, 2008).

## **Statement of the Problem**

The goal of business education programmes in Nigeria is the acquisition of both physical and intellectual skills, which will enable individuals to be self-reliant and become useful members of society. It is the responsibility of Nigerian higher institutions to prepare the required human capital through appropriate work force training and re-training. An outstanding human capital assumption is that after finishing formal tertiary education, graduates should be able to make a successful transition from these institutions of higher learning to become productive workers, self-reliant entrepreneurs, responsible parents, good citizens, selfless leaders, and live healthy lives. It is assumed, also, that on graduation, young people could have developed additional skills through training and experience that could further enhance their opportunities, capabilities, and success in their life endeavours.

In spite of the available business opportunities and conducive environment for businesses to thrive in Rivers State, the researcher has observed that business education graduates are yet to maximise these opportunities by using their creative abilities in creating jobs for themselves and others. Instead, the business graduates go about the streets in search of jobs, which are either few in supply or not available. This high rate of unemployment has generated frustration and low self-esteem amongst Business Education graduates in Rivers State and has led to increased vulnerability among some youths to drugs, disease, social instability, conflict, militancy, hooliganism, poverty, thuggery, arm robbery, restiveness, ethnic-political clashes, and other social vices. Graduates' lack of skills has also resulted in their marginalisation and exclusion from social activities and government affairs due to an inferiority complex. It is against this background that this study seeks to determine the competency needs of business education graduates for employability potential in Rivers State, Nigeria.

### **Aim and Objectives of the Study**

The study determined the relationship between competence needs of Business Education graduates and employability potentials in Rivers State. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Ascertain the relationship between communication skill competence and white-collar employment of Business Education graduates in Rivers State.
2. Determine the relationship between communication skill competence and blue-collar employment of Business Education graduates in Rivers State.
3. Examine the relationship between communication skill competence and entrepreneurial engagement of Business Education graduates in Rivers State.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions were answered in the course of this research work;

1. What is the relationship between communication skill competence and white-collar employment of Business Education graduates in Rivers State?
2. What is the relationship between communication skill competence and blue-collar employment of Business Education graduates in Rivers State?
3. What is the relationship between communication skill competence and entrepreneurial engagement of Business Education graduates in Rivers State?

### **Hypotheses**

The following null hypotheses were formulated to guide the study and were tested at the 0.05 level of significance.

- H<sub>01</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between communication skill competence and white-collar employment of Business Education graduates in Rivers State.
- H<sub>02</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between communication skill competence and blue-collar employment of Business Education graduates in Rivers State.

**H<sub>03</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between communication skill competence and entrepreneurial engagement of Business Education graduates in Rivers State.

### **Research Design**

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design and the correlational research design. Descriptive survey design, according to Osuala (2004), enables researchers to obtain vital information and facts about people, their beliefs, opinions, attitudes, and behaviours. Anyakoha (2009) also stated that the design entails the use of questionnaire, interview, and observation in order to determine the opinions, attitudes, preferences and perception of the respondents. On the other hand, correlational research design involves the collection of data to objectively determine the relationship between variables. It helps to indicate the direction and magnitude of the relationship between the variables.

Therefore, descriptive survey research and the correlational research design are considered appropriate for this study because questionnaire was administered to obtain data on the competency needs of business education graduates for employability potentials from which the relationship between the independent and dependent variable were determined.

### **Population for the Study**

The population of this study consisted of 2,552 business education graduates from the period of 2015/2016 - 2018/2019 academic sessions. The population comprised of graduates drawn from the Department of Business Education from the tertiary institutions used for the study for the period covered by this study. Consequently, the tertiary institutions used comprised of the Ignatius Ajuru University of Education Port Harcourt, Federal College of Education Technical (FCET) Omoku, and Rivers State University, as shown below.

### **Sample and Sampling Technique**

The sample size of 331 graduates from the selected institutions constituted the sample for the study. The researcher sent copies of the questionnaire to the respondents via social media platforms, like WhatsApp, Telegram, and Emails. The sample size of 331 respondents was derived base on Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table of sample size determination; that recommended for the utilization of 331 as sample size, for the population within the range of 2,401 - 2,599. Furthermore, the Bowley's proportional allocation formula was adapted for an even distribution of the sample across the institutions utilized for the data collection.

In selecting the sample for the study, purposive sampling technique was adopted; since the researcher cannot meet the respondents face-to-face to administer the instrument; only respondents who were reached via social media platforms (WhatsApp, Telegram, and Email) constituted the sample size of the study. The study adopted the social media approach for easy distribution and retrieval of the instrument to the respondents many of whom would be difficult to reach one-on-one.

### **Methods of Data Collection/Instrumentation**

A self-structured questionnaire titled "Competency Needs and Graduate Employability Potentials Questionnaire (CNGEPQ)" was used as the yardstick to measure the relationship

between competency needs of business education graduates and their employability potentials. The questionnaire was divided into two sections; A & B. Section "A" covered respondent's demographic information while section "B" covered the instructions guiding the filing of the instrument and the items of the instrument. Section B was further divided into two sub-section; the Part I covered the items on the dimensions of competency needs, having three clusters – covering communication skill competence of 15-items, while the Part II covered the items on Employability Potentials, with three clusters – covering white-collar employment, blue-collar employment, and entrepreneurial engagement, with a total of 15-items. However, the items of the questionnaire were rated on a modified five (5) point Likert scale, ranging from Very High Extent (VHE) = 5, High Extent (HE) = 4, Moderate Extent (ME) = 3, Low Extent (LE) = 2, and Very Low Extent (VLE) = 1 for items of Part I, while the response of the items of Part II were also rated on a five (5) point Likert scale on a from Strongly Agree (SA) = 5 points; Agree (A) = 3 points, Undecided (UD) = 3 points; Disagree (D) = 2 points; and Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1 point, with a mean criterion of 3.0 for the two instruments.

### **Validity of Instrument**

The fact validity of the instrument was ascertained three experts from the departments of Business Education in Ignatius Ajuru University of Education and Rivers State University. The researcher's supervisor and three other research experts were given copies of the questionnaire to check the adequacy and correctness of the questionnaire items. Suggestions, observations, and criticisms from the experts helped to modify and improve the instrument.

### **Reliability of Instrument**

To obtain the reliability of the instrument, copies of the questionnaire were trial tested by administering it on 20 Business Studies graduates gotten from old students association of Madonna University Elele, Rivers State. The graduates from the institution were used in carrying out the reliability testing of the instrument, because the institution offered business education. In addition, the institution was selected because; it shared similar geographical and socio-economic factors with public institutions in the State. However, for obtaining the internal consistency of the instrument, Cronbach Alpha reliability method was used to analyse the data gotten from the administered instruments to the respondents, yielding a reliability coefficient of 0.88, which by implication was enough to adjudge the instrument as being reliable.

### **Administration of Instrument**

The researcher, aided with information derived from the various Heads of Departments of the selected institutions used for the study, distributed, and retrieved the instrument used for the data collection. In order to effectively access the respondents, an introductory letter prepared by the researcher was presented to the Heads of Department of the selected tertiary institutions, for permission to access the brochure and contact details of the graduates from the Department of Business Education for the period of 2015/2016 – 2018/2019 academic sessions.

Since, the researcher cannot reach the respondents face-to-face to administer the questionnaire, the researcher sent copies of the questionnaire to the respondents via social media platforms, like WhatsApp, Telegram, and Emails. Calls were put across to some of the

respondents to aid distribution and retrieval of the instrument, and to clarify respondents who needed clarification on what the essence of the study was all about. At completion of the filling of the instrument, the respondents send back the instrument via the platform it was received.

Consequently, after distribution and retrieval of the distributed questionnaire; out of the distributed copies (335), 322 copies were returned and properly filled. Therefore, 322 were used for further analysis in the study.

### **Data Collection**

335 questionnaires were distributed to the sampled tertiary institutions used for the study. The result indicated that out 331 copies of the questionnaire that were distributed representing 100%, 322 copies of questionnaire retrieved were properly filled, which represents 97.3%, as such 9 copies of the questionnaire representing 2.7% of the questionnaire were discarded because they were not properly filled. However, the table further indicated that more returns was gotten from Ignatius Ajuru University of Education Port Harcourt with 98%, followed by the Rivers State University with 97%, and lastly the Federal College of Education Technical (FCET) Omoku with 96%.

### **Method of Data Analysis**

Mean, Standard deviation, Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) were used to answer the research questions while the null hypotheses were tested using Regression Analysis, and Analysis of Covariance at the 0.05 significance level. However, the data analyses were carried out using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22.

Range of relationship and descriptive level of association

The following interpretations were used for the analysis

±0.8	-	±1.0	Very strong
±0.6	-	±0.79	Strong
±0.4	-	±0.59	Moderate
±0.2	-	±0.39	Weak
±0.0	-	±0.19	Very Weak

(Source: Etuk & Uchendu, 2008).

### **Results and Discussion**

#### **Data Analysis and Result**

**Research Question 1:** What is the relationship between communication skill competence and white-collar employment of Business Education graduates in Rivers State?

**Table 1: Pearson’s Product Moment Correlation analysis on the relationship between Communication skill competence (CMSC) and white-collar employment (WTCE) of Business Education graduates in Rivers State**

Variables	Mean	Std. Dev	N	r	Remark
CMSC	12.610	2.529	322	0.735	Strong
WTCE	14.550	2.419			

**Source:** SPSS Computation

Table 1 show the extent of the relationship between communication skill competence and white-collar employment of Business Education graduates in Rivers State. However, the result indicated that the relationship that exist between communication skill competence and white-collar employment of Business Education graduates in Rivers State is strong ( $r = 0.735$ ). The implication of this result is that the extent of relationship between communication skill competence and white-collar employment of Business Education graduates in Rivers State is strong. This means that communication skill competence increases white-collar employment of business education graduates.

**Research Question 2:** What is the relationship between communication skill competence and blue-collar employment of Business Education graduates in Rivers State?

**Table 2: Pearson’s Product Moment Correlation analysis on the relationship between communication skill competence (CMSC) and blue-collar employment (BLCE) of Business Education graduates in Rivers State**

Variables	Mean	Std. Dev	N	r	Remark
CMSC	12.610	2.529	322	0.297	Weak
BLCE	15.150	2.496			

**Source:** SPSS Computation

Table 2 shows the extent of the relationship between communication skill competence and blue-collar employment of Business Education graduates in Rivers State. However, the result indicated that the relationship that exist between communication skill competence and blue-collar employment of Business Education graduates in Rivers State is weak ( $r = 0.297$ ). The implication of this result is that the extent of relationship between communication skill competence and blue-collar employment of Business Education graduates in Rivers State is weak. This means that communication skill competence increases blue-collar employment of business education graduates.

**Research Question 3:** What is the relationship between communication skill competence and entrepreneurial engagement of Business Education graduates in Rivers State?

**Table 3: Pearson’s Product Moment Correlation analysis on the relationship between Communication skill competence (CMSC) and entrepreneurial engagement (ENLE) of Business Education graduates in Rivers State**

Variables	Mean	Std. Dev	N	r	Remark
CMSC	12.610	2.529	322	0.357	Weak
ENLE	14.690	2.711			

**Source:** SPSS Computation

Table 3 shows the extent of the relationship between communication skill competence and entrepreneurial engagement of Business Education graduates in Rivers State. However, the result indicated that the relationship that exist between communication skill competence and entrepreneurial engagement of Business Education graduates in Rivers State is weak ( $r = 0.357$ ). The implication of this result is that the extent of relationship between communication skill competence and entrepreneurial engagement of Business Education graduates in Rivers State is weak.

**Hypothesis 1:** There is no significant relationship between communication skill competence and white-collar employment of Business Education graduates in Rivers State.

**Table 4: Summary of simple linear regression of the relationship between communication skill competence and white-collar employment of Business Education graduates in Rivers State**

Variables	Coefficients	Std. Error	t	Sig.
(Constant)	12.918	0.681	18.969	0.000
CMSC	0.129	0.053	2.444	0.000*
R	0.735 <sup>a</sup>			
R-squared	0.518			
Adjusted R-squared	0.515			
F-statistic	22.497			
P-value	0.000 <sup>b</sup>			
df	320			

a. Dependent Variable: WTCE, b. Independent Variable: CMSC

c. \*Items show significant relationship with the dependent variable at the 0.05 level of significance

**Source:** SPSS Computation, 2021.

The result of table 4 show that r-value of 0.735 indicates a strong relationship between communication skill competence and white-collar employment of Business Education graduates in Rivers State. The  $r^2$ -value of 0.518 indicated roughly the variation of 52% to the relationship between communication skill competence and white-collar employment of Business Education graduates in Rivers State. Furthermore, since, F-statistic = 22.497,  $t = 2.444$ , at  $df = 320$ , and  $p = 0.000 < 0.050$ , hence, null hypothesis one is rejected at the 0.050 level of significance. Therefore, there is significant relationship between communication skill competence and white-collar employment of Business Education graduates in Rivers State.



**Hypothesis 2:** There is no significant relationship between communication skill competence and blue-collar employment of Business Education graduates in Rivers State.

**Table 5: Summary of simple linear regression of the relationship between communication skill competence and blue-collar employment of Business Education graduates in Rivers State**

Variables	Coefficients	Std. Error	t	Sig.
(Constant)	11.446	0.677	16.900	0.000
CMSC	0.294	0.053	5.571	0.000*
R	0.297 <sup>a</sup>			
R-squared	0.088			
Adjusted R-squared	0.089			
F-statistic	31.038			
P-value	0.000 <sup>b</sup>			
df	320			

a. Dependent Variable: BLCE, b. Independent Variable: CMSC

\*Items show significant relationship with the dependent variable at the 0.05 level of significance

Source: SPSS Computation, 2021.

The result of Table 5 show that r-value of 0.294 indicates a weak relationship between communication skill competence and blue-collar employment of Business Education graduates in Rivers State. The  $r^2$ -value of 0.088 indicated roughly the variation of 9% to the relationship between communication skill competence and blue-collar employment of Business Education graduates in Rivers State. Furthermore, since, F-statistic = 31.038,  $t = 5.571$ , at  $df = 320$ , and  $p = 0.000 < 0.050$ , hence, null hypothesis two is rejected at the 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, there is significant relationship between communication skill competence and blue-collar employment of Business Education graduates in Rivers State.

**Hypothesis 3:** There is no significant relationship between communication skill competence and entrepreneurial engagement of Business Education graduates in Rivers State.

**Table 6: Summary of simple linear regression of the relationship between communication skill competence and entrepreneurial engagement of Business Education graduates in Rivers State**

Variables	Coefficients	Std. Error	t	Sig.
(Constant)	9.873	0.720	13.719	0.000
CMSC	0.382	0.056	6.831	0.000*
R	0.357 <sup>a</sup>			
R-squared	0.127			
Adjusted R-squared	0.125			
F-statistic	46.659			
P-value	0.000 <sup>b</sup>			
df	320			

a. Dependent Variable: ENLE, b. Independent Variable: CMSC

c. \*Items show significant relationship with the dependent variable at the 0.05 level of significance

Source: SPSS Computation, 2021.

The result of Table 6 show that r-value of 0.357 indicates a weak relationship between communication skill competence and entrepreneurial engagement of Business Education graduates in Rivers State. The  $r^2$ -value of 0.127 indicated roughly the variation of 13% to the relationship between communication skill competence and entrepreneurial engagement of Business Education graduates in Rivers State. Furthermore, since, F-statistic = 46.659,  $t = 6.831$ , at  $df = 320$ , and  $p = 0.000 < 0.050$ , hence, null hypothesis three is rejected at the 0.050 level of significance. Therefore, there is significant relationship between communication skill competence and entrepreneurial engagement of Business Education graduates in Rivers State.

### **Discussion of Findings**

The study investigated the relationship between competence needs of Business Education graduates and employability potentials in Rivers State. However, the result showed that the relationship that between communication skill competence and white-collar employment of Business Education graduates in Rivers State is strong. Furthermore, the result indicated that there is significant relationship between communication skill competence and white-collar employment of Business Education graduates in Rivers State. This finding is in agreement with the study conducted by Wahyuni and Masih (2018) which revealed that communication skills attributes with the highest important level required entering the workplace as perceived by the students.

The result showed that the relationship that exists between communication skill competence and blue-collar employment of Business Education graduates in Rivers State is weak. Also, the result indicated that there is significant relationship between communication skill competence and blue-collar employment of Business Education graduates in Rivers State.

The result further showed that the relationship that exists between communication skill competence and entrepreneurial engagement of Business Education graduates in Rivers State is weak and at the same time there is significant relationship between communication skill competence and entrepreneurial engagement of Business Education graduates in Rivers State. This finding is in agreement with the study of Orike and Iyalla (2017) which revealed that Business Education students' communication skills improves their entrepreneurial engagement.

### **Conclusion**

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that it is high time tertiary institutions in Rivers State liaise with the government to finance in-service training and retraining of lecturers in the area of the technical know-how of teaching what is required if graduates are to be meaningfully competent in blue-collar employment and entrepreneurial engagement, as a lecturer cannot give what he/she does not have. In addition, if tertiary institutions put in the necessary facilities in terms of business education knowledge, then graduates' communication skills competence would improve significantly.

## **Recommendations**

Considering the findings and conclusion of this study the following recommendations were proffered:

1. Tertiary institutions in Rivers State offering business education need to be provided with up-to-date learning facilities that would aid the effective teaching of communication skills.
2. Administrator of tertiary institutions should raise the consciousness of students about the need for to see themselves after graduation as job creators instead of job seekers, as such should internalize the skills needed to excel in any work environment.
3. Before graduation student should be given the opportunity to attend training programmes that should be organized for by the Ministry of Education at the state level for would-be-business education graduates, where students from different institutions can showcase the competence skills in solving workplace challenges.
4. Business educators should endeavour to attend conferences and workshops in order to keep themselves abreast of current trend both in pedagogical and technical aspects of their teaching profession with a view to make meaningful impact in their teaching at all times.
5. School administrators should encourage business educators to develop themselves through active participation in professional activities that are critical to their profession.

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