

PROBLEM SOLVING SKILLS REQUIRED OF BUSINESS EDUCATION STUDENTS FOR JOB PERFORMANCE IN ORGANIZATIONS IN A DIGITAL ERA

AGWAZIE Bridget

Department of Business Education, University of Delta, Agbor

Abstract

This paper assessed problem-solving skills required of Business Education students for job performance in organisations in a Digital Era. Two research questions were raised and two null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. The researcher adopted a descriptive survey design. The population size was 380, the whole population of 380 was used as sample due to its manageable size. The instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire designed to elicit response based on the research questions set for the study. The instrument was validated by three experts, two in Business Education and one in Measurement and Evaluation. Reliability of the research instrument was obtained using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient. The overall reliability index for the instrument was 0.89. The data collected was analysed using Mean with Standard deviation for the research questions and t-test for the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The results obtained indicated that the senior civil servants in organisations were of the opinion that the low level problem-solving skills and the high level problem-solving skills were highly required of Business Education Students. Thus, it was concluded that low and high level problem-solving skills were very highly required of Business Education students for job performance in organisations in a digital era. It was also recommended that Business education students should equip themselves with these problem-solving skills to make them relevant in the world of work.

Introduction

Development of a nation depends on the important role played by education. This is because without a form of education, there will be no continuity and link between the past and present and even the future. Education is a process that helps an individual to develop his whole being. Traditional African societies had their form of education which catered for the needs of precolonial societies before the advent of western education introduced by the colonial masters many years ago. The essence of education cannot be overemphasized as it is a process of liberating the mind of an individual to be creative, innovative and embrace problem solving and survival skills. This will enable individuals live a useful and productive life in the society by impacting positively on its growth and development.

Business Education- being a part of Vocational and Technical Education in Nigeria remains a skill acquisition programme which provides training for

individuals to perform in the world of work. Historically, Business Education was first introduced at Joseph Etukokwu's School at Onitsha in 1930s to 1962 when Eastern Secondary School of Commerce in Port Harcourt was also established indicating the predominance of private proprietors (Osuala, 1985 in Obayi & Okafor, 2015). Business Education exists at the vocational and prevocational schools within the levels of post primary, the technical colleges, the polytechnics, colleges of technical teacher education and universities. It is a 'double-major' and, cannot be combined with another course-area. Business Education is presented within four options in the college of education, namely: Accounting Education, Office Technology and Management Education (OTME), Entrepreneurial Education and Marketing Education (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2020). The philosophy of business education is to foster national development through business programmes as

enshrined in the National Policy on education (NPE, 2014). Consequently, business education programmes shall provide skills in now and emerging jobs and innovations to fit the world of work or self-reliant. The medium is the provision of dynamic education that is demand driven. Business education programme aims are to produce capable graduates that will be able to communicate business subjects, epitomise business spirit in the society, development of vocational and entrepreneurial skills, and business competencies for self-employment and life of work in the office. To achieve the above, there must be entry qualifications, facilities, ICT laboratory, model office, accounting laboratory and personnel.

According to Igbokwe (2012), Business education is that aspect of total educational programme that provides the knowledge, skills, understanding, and attitudes needed to perform in the business world as producers and/or consumers of goods and services that business offers. It is a broad area of knowledge which deals with the entire enterprise system - preparing people for roles in business as employees, entrepreneurs, employers or simply as self-employed. Though, in the Nigerian context it is provided that a Business Education graduate is resourceful and can work in any field of venture as a teacher, administrator and even manager. It offers students an incentive for thinking creatively about an industry and broadens their understandings of career opportunities in industry (Ikpeama & Nwaokokorom, 2017). Therefore, as a business education graduate, employment opportunities should be abundant.

The notion of employability in this contemporary era has remained the centre of focus for job seekers, educators, employers, and government. Brown and Hesketh (2004) opined that employability as the comparative ventures of receiving and upholding diverse classes of occupation.

Employability not only depends on whether one is able to achieve the requirements of specific jobs, but also on how one stands relative to others within a hierarchy of job seekers (Nwaokokorom, 2019). Ezeyi, et al.

(2020) opined that skills which leads to technological advancement is capital intensive to achieve. It is manual dexterity acquired through the repetitive performance of an operation. The skills required of employees seem to be different from what the employers want. Some employers have tried to outline some of these skills they want from job seekers. Modern office is more than traditional office, hence there is need for students of accounting education to perform varieties of the needed employment skills.

Problem solving is the ability to understand a problem by breaking it down into smaller parts, and identifying the key issues, implications and providing solutions. The problem-solving technique guides students through the critical thinking process and utilizes learner collaboration (Hou, et al., 2007 & Nwaokokorom, 2019). Students lack ability to identify a problem and how to apply the right approach to get the solution to the problem. (Naada, 2010). Problem-solving skills encompass a range of abilities and approaches used to identify, analyze, and resolve issues or challenges. These skills are crucial in various aspects of life, including professional, academic, and personal domains. Here are some components that constitute problem-solving skills:

1. **Analytical Skills:** The ability to break down complex problems into smaller components and understand the underlying issues or factors involved.
2. **Critical Thinking:** Being able to objectively evaluate information, arguments, and evidence to make reasoned judgments or decisions.
3. **Creativity:** Thinking outside the box and generating innovative solutions or approaches to problems.
4. **Research Skills:** Knowing how to gather relevant information, data, or resources to understand the problem better and explore potential solutions.
5. **Decision Making:** Assessing different options or courses of action and selecting the most appropriate one based on available information and desired outcomes.
6. **Adaptability:** Being flexible and open-

- mindful in adjusting strategies or approaches as new information or challenges arise.
7. **Collaboration:** Working effectively with others to brainstorm ideas, share perspectives, and collectively solve problems.
 8. **Communication Skills:** Clearly articulating ideas, explaining reasoning, and conveying information to others involved in the problem-solving process.
 9. **Time Management:** Prioritizing tasks and allocating time effectively to address the problem efficiently without unnecessary delays.
 10. **Resilience:** Persevering through setbacks, failures, or obstacles encountered during the problem-solving process and learning from them to improve future attempts.
 11. **Systems Thinking:** Understanding how various elements or factors interact within a system and considering the broader implications of proposed solutions.
 12. **Emotional Intelligence:** Recognizing and managing emotions, both one's own and others', to navigate interpersonal dynamics and conflicts that may arise during problem-solving.
 13. **Resourcefulness:** Making the most of available resources, whether tangible or intangible, to overcome constraints and find viable solutions.
 14. **Risk Assessment:** Evaluating potential risks or uncertainties associated with different solutions and developing strategies to mitigate or manage them effectively.
 15. **Persistence:** Staying committed to finding a solution, even when faced with difficult or seemingly insurmountable challenges.

These skills are often interconnected and can be honed through practice, experience, and continuous learning. Developing strong problem-solving skills is valuable in various contexts and can contribute to personal and professional success.

Jones and George in Oduma and He (2012) defined organization as a body, school, an industry or business, the civil service, department or government ministry, social club, church, or even non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Organizational skills deal with existence organized methodical and capable to blueprint work to come across target, deadlines and observe improvement of work.

Statement of the problem

Job performance in organizations is the engine that drives productivity which other elements like motivation and skill-grease the engine. Adeyemo (2000) explained that job performance is so important that it cannot be ignored in the behaviour and action that brings out the desired results of the organisation which are higher productivity and profitability. It embeds skill, willingness to perform assigned tasks putting extra effort to achieve results, creativity, and ingenuity. It is sad to note that many graduates of business education can hardly demonstrate adequate utilization of the basic skills, competences attitudes, and values in their places of work and skills required of employees seem to be different from what the employers want. These skills are seen as the bed rock of their core activities of knowledge economy that is geared towards bridging the gap between the services provided and meeting the needs of their employers. This unsatisfactory state of affair has necessitated the need to ascertain empirically the problem-solving skills required of business education students for job performance in organizations in a digital era.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine low and high level problem-solving skills required of Business Education students for job performance in organizations in a digital era. Specifically, the study determined:

1. Low level problem-solving skills required of Business Education students for job performance in organizations.
2. High level problem solving skills

required of Business Education students for job performance in organizations.

Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated to guide the study:

1. What are the low level problem-solving skills required of Business Education students for job performance in organizations?
2. What are the high level problem-solving skills required of Business Education students for job performance in organizations?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested at .05 level of significance:

Ho: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female senior civil servants on the Low level problem-solving skills required of Business Education students for job performance in organisations.

Ho₂: There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female senior civil servants on the high level problem-solving skills required of Business Education students for job performance in organisations.

Methodology

The study used survey design method. The Population of the study comprised

380 senior civil servants from 26 ministries. The sample for the subject study consists of 380 senior civil servants. The instrument used for this study was the questionnaire, the questionnaire is in two sections: section (A) contains general question on personal data of respondents, the section (B) carries questions using 4 points Like rating scale of highly required (HR), Required (R) fairly required (FR) Not required (NR). Copies of the instrument were administered through research assistants and personal contacts. A total of 50 questionnaires were distributed to employers and business education graduates in Ika South Local Government Area of Delta State. The 50 copies disseminated were correctly filled and returned. The researcher used simple statistics in analysis of data collected. Mean and standard deviation were used. The items that attracted the mean rating of 2.50 and above on the 4 point rating scale was accepted, while item that attracted less than rejected. The T-test was used at 0.05 level of the significance to test the hypotheses formulated for the study. In testing the hypothesis t-test, the decision rule is: if the t-calculated is less than the critical value, the null hypothesis is accepted otherwise rejected.

Results

Research Question 1

What are the low level problem solving skills required of Business Education students for job performance in organisations?

Table 1: Responses of Senior Civil Servants on low level problem solving skills required of Business Education students for Job performance in organizations.

S/N	Item Description	X	SD	Remark
	Custer 1: low level problem solving skills. Ability to;			
1	distinguish between cause and effect	3.57	053	VHR
2	Brainstorm	3.62	050	VHR

3	reason abstractly	3.54	C.51	VHR
4	solve mathematical problems	3.57	057	VHR
5	be objective at all times	3.63	049	VHR
6	be innovative	3.58	0.53	VHR
7	be critical in thinking	3.75	0.44	VHR
8	possess negotiating activity	3.62	0.51	VHR
9	understand problems	3.71	0.50	VHR
10	cope under stress	3.50	0.49	VHR
	Cluster Mean	3.59	0.16	VHR

\bar{X} - Mean, SD = Standard Deviation, $N= 364$ Source: Field Survey, 2022

The data presented in Table 1 indicates that, the Senior Civil Servants responses have cluster mean of 3.59, and standard deviation of 0.16. This means that, the senior civil servants are homogenous in their responses, and they agree that item; 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18 and 19 are Very Highly Required (VHR) of Business Education students for job performance in organizations. While item; 1, 4 and 20 are Highly Required

(HR). Therefore, according to the Senior Civil Servants all items in Table 1 low level problem solving skills are required of Business Education students for job performance in organizations.

Research Question 2

What are the high level problem-solving skills required of Business Education students for job performance in organizations?

Table 3: Responses of Senior Civil Servants on high level problem-solving skills required of Business Education students for job performance in organizations?

S/N	Item Description	X	SD	Remark
Cluster 2: (High Level Problem Solving Skills. Ability to;)				
21	possess wealth of experience in office occupation	3.78	0.44	VHR
22	demonstrate high level of courage in task situation	3.51	0.50	VHR
23	possess mental intelligence	3.69	0.51	VHR
24	discover alternative approaches to situations	3.61	052	VHR
25	Analyse situation	3.75	045	VHR
26	distinguish between cause and effect	3.57	053	VHR
27	Brainstorm	3.62	050	VHR
28	reason abstractly	3.54	C.51	VHR
29	solve mathematical problems	3.57	057	VHR
30	be objective at all times	3.63	049	VHR
31	be innovative	3.58	0.53	VHR
32	be critical in thinking	3.75	0.44	VHR
33	possess negotiating activity	3.62	0.51	VHR
34	understand problems	3.71	0.50	VHR
35	cope under stress	3.50	0.49	VHR
	Cluster Mean	3.63	0.16	VHR

\bar{X} ~ Mean, SD Standard Deviation, $N= 364$

Source: Field Survey, 2022

The data presented in Table 3 indicates that the Senior Civil Servants responses have a cluster mean of 3.63, and standard deviation of 0.16. This implies that the Senior Civil Servants are unanimous in their responses, and they agree that all items on high level problem-solving skills are

highly required of Business Education students for job performance in organizations.

Null Hypothesis 1

There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female

senior civil servants on the low level problem solving skills required of Business Education students for job performance in organizations.

Table 2: The T-Test Result Of The Mean Responses Of Male And Female Senior Civil Servants On Low Level Problem Solving Skills Required of Business Education Students for Job Performance In Organisations.

Gender	N	X	SD	Df	t-cal	t-cri	Decision
Males	213	3.59	0.16	362	0.59	1.96	Not significant
Females	151	3.58	0.16				

The result in Table 2 shows that t-cal is 0.59 and t-cri is 1.96 at .05 significant level. This indicates that t-cal (0.59) is less than t-cri (1.96). As a result, the stated null hypothesis that, there is no significant difference between the mean ratings of Male and Female senior civil servants regarding the low level problem solving skills required of Business Education

students for job performance in organizations is not rejected.

Null Hypothesis 2

There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female senior civil servants on the High level problem-solving skills required of Business Education students for job performance in organisations.

Table 4: The T-Test Result Of The Mean Responses Of Male And Female Senior Civil Servants On High Level Problem-Solving Skills Required Of Business Education Students For Job Performance In Organizations.

Gender	N	X	SD	Df	t-cal	t-cri	Decision
Males	213	3.63	0.16	362	0.61	1.96	Not significant
Females	151	3.62	0.15				

The result in Table 4 shows that, t-cal is 0.61 and t-cri is 1.96 at .05 significant level. This indicates that, t-cal (0.61) is less than t-cri (1.96). As a result, the stated null hypothesis that, there is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female senior civil servants regarding the High level problem-solving skills required of Business Education students for job performance in organisations is not rejected.

Discussion of the Findings

Respondents from 26 ministries agreed that accounting skills are required of Business Education students for job performance in organisations. This finding is in consonance with that of Anyakoha (2009) that accounting and financial skills are needed to be able to interpret financial statements, knowledge of costing and ability to understand gross and net profit of any business enterprise. The knowledge skill will

enable the students to hold the understanding of business management while the technical skills will enable them to run the day-to-day activity of this enterprise.

Another finding revealed that problem solving skills are very highly required of Business education students for job performance in organisations. This is in line with Hou, et al. (2007) that the problem-solving technique guides students through the critical thinking process and utilizes learner collaboration. Problem needs to be solved to progress in life. Also, Naada (2010) states that students lack ability to identify a problem and how to apply the right approach to get the solution to the problem. Without identification of problems, solution will be difficult.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, the researchers concluded that senior civil servants

in Delta State ministries are of the opinion that low and high level skills and problem-solving skills are highly required of Business Education students for job performance in organisations in a digital era. It was also concluded that there is no significant difference in mean ratings of male and female senior civil servants regarding the low and high level problem-solving skills required of Business Education students for job performance in organisations in a digital era.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made:

1. Business education students should endeavour to equip themselves with all the relevant low and high level problem solving skills necessary for them to create and maintain their customers' needs as they work in organizations.
2. Business education students can equip themselves with relevant problem-solving skills through a combination of academic coursework, practical experience, and personal development efforts

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