

ASSESSING THE COMPETENCIES OF BUSINESS EDUCATION STUDENTS ON THEIR PROFICIENCY ON WORD PROCESSING AND SPREADSHEET APPLICATIONS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEMOCRACY

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Abstract

The trend of word processing and spreadsheet applications usage in the business world necessitates that business education students are highly proficient in word processing and spreadsheet applications so as to be relevant and highly valued in the job market as this will lead to sustainable democracy in Nigeria. The purpose of this study was to examine the proficiency of business education students in word processing and spreadsheet applications for sustainable democracy in Nigeria. Two research questions were formulated and analyzed. The population of the study consists of all business education students in Edo state. A sample size of 180 was used for the study. Data were obtained through a 32-item questionnaire. The split-half method was used in a pilot study to establish the reliability of the instrument. Data was analyzed with mean and standard deviation while z-test was used to test the hypothesis. Findings from the study indicated that students were highly proficient in the use of word processing applications but were grossly inadequate in the use of spreadsheet applications. It was recommended among others that highly competent lecturers should be employed and retraining of existing lecturers on the word processing and spreadsheet applications in order for the sustainable democracy and development to be achieved.

Keywords: Competencies, Business education, Proficiency, word processing applications, sustainable democracy

Business Education is a skill oriented course. It gives individuals the skills to hire, learn and work as productive citizens in a global society. The economic downturn has had a great impact on the graduates of Business Education but it is likely to have a severe impact on these graduates who are not skilled in their area of study. Thus, according to Igbokwe (2012) Business Education is that aspect of the total educational programme that provides the knowledgeable skills, understanding and attitudes needed to perform in the business world as producers or consumers of goods and services that business offers. Igbokwe (2012) opined that the philosophy of Nigeria's education is based on the Nigeria National Policy of Education Objectives is of particular interest to Business Education which includes the training of the mind in the understanding of the world

around; the acquisition of appropriate skills, abilities and competences both mental and physical as equipment for individual to live in and contribute to the development of his society (FGN, 2004).

Based on the above, it is the function of the curriculum in tertiary institutions to provide experiences and means through which students shall gain experiences that will influence their physical, social, emotional growth in desirable ways that is bring about viable education for sustainable democracy, peace and unity in Nigeria. However, in order to provide such experiences and means, the relevance of business education in achieving sustainable democracy cannot be over-emphasized because of its potential in equipping the recipients with the relevant skills for self-employment. This is in conformity with the statement made by ABEN(2017) that business education can be a major instrument for national development because it promotes industrialization through its entrepreneurship offerings.

One of the aims of the business education according to Njoku (2006) is to empower one with desirable skills, knowledge and values to perform specific functions so as to self- reliant. National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) (2004) identified some of the competencies expected of Business Education students to include competencies in - word processing, spreadsheet, power point presentation, data base management system among others. Each of these areas of competencies consists of a body of knowledge, skills and abilities which the students must possess. (Okoro, 2013).However, business education graduates need word processing and spreadsheet applications competencies for office use and for sustainable democracy. Students of business education programme should be adequately fortified with word processing and spreadsheet applications skills to make them successful entrepreneurs and for sustainable democracy.

Word processing application according to Chukwumezie (2006) is one of the important components of office information system and was developed as a means of raising office productivity. He further explained that word processing involve how to create files, use files, use input device to enter and edit text, manipulate information, preview, print and save a document etc. while spreadsheet is a group name for software that is used for financial management and calculation. They are used in a wide range of business situation such as, forecasting, cash flow analysis, budgeting, financial statement preparation, scenario analysis etc. The knowledge in these computer fundamental packages will enable teaching and learning in Business Education to be more effective as it will equip the students with what they will expect in the labour world as well as expose them in being self-reliant and good entrepreneurs in future.

Word Processing and spreadsheet Application Skills Required of Business Education students

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Ubani (2008) defined a word processing as a software package under Microsoft office, that is designed to enable users to type, edit, store and generally process their documents. Ubani also stressed that word processing is also used to create base-document such as reports, letters, newsletter; memos etc .Word processing applications are software packages that can be basically used to create letters, reports and other documents. Osuagwu, Onuodu and Ugwu (2008) described word processing as an application package used for processing and a very powerful tool for documentation. They stressed that word processing has powerful features and abilities that makes it different from electronic typewriter which makes the user to be able to utilize it efficiently in his office duties. Word processing applications skills enable secretaries to be capable of creating, storing, and printing documents. According to West (2016), Word processing software enables the user to easily create and edit documents, including inserting, deleting, and moving words, sentences through the use of different type sizes and styles and through different arrangements. Agomuo (2014) observed that word processing can be likened to a typewriter inside a computer in that it incorporates all the duties of a typewriter which basically are; the ability to type and produce text on paper, store and manipulate text in documents and get printed copies.

Igiri and Ubani (2014) stressed that Microsoft word allows for the creating of document and making any changes anywhere in the document. They further observed that the document can also be saved for modification at a later time or to be opened on any other computer using the same word processor. It is one of the often used application programmes which Business Educator can utilise in carrying out office activities for economic diversification. Word application is computer application which a Business Educator can utilize in manipulating alphabets and numbers to form words. Agomuo (2014) stated that word processing allows the user to do the following more than just typing your text –they are as follows: Store the document for future reference or use, make corrections to your document very conveniently, format your document to a wide variety of specification, automate some function such as page numbering, generation of indexes etc, check the spelling of text in your document for correctness as well as have greater control over page layout attribute such as margin. Additionally, you can retrieve previously created documents and modify or print them as needed. In the use of the automatic word wrap, the typewriter you use the carriage return at the end of the line to advance to the next line of text, otherwise text run off the page., in automatic word wrap, as the typing approach as the second line without a carriage return key at the end of the paragraph and not the end of each line. Microsoft word is an important software package that secretaries require to enable them effectively perform their office functions. The features of standard word processor according to Igiri and Ubani (2014) are as follows: insert text which allows the operator to insert text anywhere, delete text that allows you to erase characters, words and lines, or pages as easily as you can cross them out on paper. Cut and paste allows you to remove (cut) a section of a text from one place in a document and insert (paste) in somewhere else. Copy, allow you to duplicate a section of

text. Page size margins, allows you to define various page sizes and margins, and the word processor will automatically readjust text if you change the margin. Search and replace; allows you to direct the word processor to search for a particular word or phrase. Print; allows you to send a document to a printer to get hardcopy (West, 2016).

Cursor control enables you to easily move the cursor or insertion point from one character to another. Also, quick keys are available to move to the left or right of a word at a time. Another important feature, block operations enables you to mark a portion of text and move, delete, or copy it. These functions are also called cut and paste or copy and paste (Igiri and Ubani, 2014). Search and replace operation allow you to check an entire document for specific text and replace or erase it. With the word processing packages you can manipulate the final printed document by changing the size, appearance, base font and colour of the text. Text alignment or justification also enable the user with a word processor, to control text alignment or justification to the left, right, centre or full align Page numbering: You can automatically insert page numbers in your document. You can even designate where page numbers will be positioned on the page. Check spelling and grammar allows spelling and grammar to be checked with the grammar checker. It locates spelling mistakes and bad grammar in your document and offer corrections Header and footer can only be installed once for each document. They can include page numbers which will adjust automatically to the number of pages in the document. Mail merge enables the user to combine files to create new document for example, a file containing a letter and the result will be an individual letter for each address. File management allows the user to create, delete, move, and search for files. Font specifications; allows you to change fonts within a document. For example, you can specify bold, italics, and underline. Most word processors also let you change the font size and even the typeface. Footnotes and cross-references automate the numbering and placement of footnotes and enable you to easily cross-reference other sections of the document. Graphics allows you to embed illustrations and graphs into a document (West, 2016; Igiri and Ubani, 2014; Agomuo, 2014).

Statement of the Problem

Most countries of the world especially developing countries are facing economic recession. At a critical time like this, what the nation needs is a theoretical and skill oriented programme that can equip the products with skills relevant for sustainable development. Business education students are expected to be equipped with relevant word processing and spreadsheet applications for sustainable democracy, peace and unity in Nigeria. However the extent to which business education students in Nigerian universities are proficient in word processing and spreadsheet application has not been ascertained, hence this study seeks to assess the competencies of business education students on their proficiency on word processing and spreadsheet applications for sustainable development in Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the study is to determine the basic competencies acquired by Business Education students in the use of word processing and spreadsheet applications for sustainable democracy in Nigeria. The specific objectives of the study include:

1. To determine the word processing competencies acquired by Business Education male and female students for sustainable democracy in Nigeria.
2. To determine the spreadsheet competencies acquired by Business Education male and female students for sustainable democracy in Nigeria

Research questions

To address the objectives of this study, the following research questions are posited:

1. To what extent are business education students proficient on word processing applications for sustainable democracy in Nigeria
2. To what extent are business education students proficient on spreadsheet applications for sustainable democracy in Nigeria

Method

The study adopted the descriptive survey research design. Descriptive survey research is used for the discovery of meaning in the data collected so that facts and events can be understood, interpreted and explained. The present study fits into the above description as it only sought the opinion of respondents on the word processing and spreadsheet application skills possessed by Business Education students in universities in Edo state, Nigeria.

Population of the Study

The population of this study is made up of all final year Business Education students in the universities in Edo state where business education is being offered. They are University of Benin, Benin City and Benson Idahosa University, Benin city. The population consists of 156 students from university of Benin and from Benson Idahosa University.

Instrumentation

The instrument for data is a structured questionnaire developed by the researcher. The questionnaire is divided into two sections. Section A is prepared to obtain background information of the respondents and comprises three (3) items. Section B contains items grouped into 2 (two) headings in line with the specific purposes of the study. The items are structured on a 4 point rating scale of Highly Proficient (HP), Proficient (P), Fairly Proficient (FP) and Barely Proficient (BP). The instrument was validated by experts and their suggestions and corrections were reflected. The reliability coefficient of the instrument was established using correlation coefficient formula to determine the two

halves. The correlation coefficient values yielded 0.86 for word processing and 0.79 for spreadsheet. 150 questionnaires were retrieved and analyzed with mean and standard deviation. The mean rating used to analyze the data was interpreted in relation to real limit of numbers 3.50 – 4.00 as Highly Proficient (HP), 2.50 – 3.49 regarded as Proficient (P), 1.50 – 2.49 Fairly Proficient (FP) and 0.5 – 1.49 as Barely Proficient (BP).

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Research Question 1 To what extent are business education students proficient on word processing applications for sustainable democracy in Nigeria?

Table 1: Respondents Mean rating on Word Processing Competencies by Business Education students in Universities

S/N	Word Processing Proficiencies	Mean	SD	Remarks
1.	Ability to start Microsoft Word	3.40	.74	HP
2.	Ability to use Menu options	3.38	.89	HP
3.	Ability to create a well formatted document	3.56	.83	HP
4.	Ability to save a document	3.47	.84	HP
5.	Ability to open an existing document	3.34	.86	HP
6.	Ability to use the tool bar	3.87	.70	HP
7.	Ability to open an existing word document	2.54	.54	HP
8.	Ability to print out document	3.00	.65	HP
9.	Ability to undo and redo text	3.54	.78	HP
10.	Ability to edit document	3.21	.67	HP
11.	create a folder	3.26	.89	HP
12.	set margins	3.66	.78	HP
13.	insert page number	3.54	.80	HP
14.	set margins	2.87	.88	HP
15.	Ability to insert page number	3.55	.86	HP
16.	Ability to insert paragraph	3.12	.79	HP
17.	ability to use spell checker	3.56	.85	HP
18.	ability to create a table	3.22	.70	HP
19.	ability to insert graph	2.67	.80	HP
20.	find and replace text	2.55	.81	HP
21.	apply header and footer	3.00	.83	HP
22.	use print preview	3.40	.78	HP

The result of the data analysis of research question 1 as shown in table 1 reveals the word processing proficiency of business education students in universities in Edo state. The results show that business education students are highly proficient in word processing

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skills. This assertion is true since it has mean values which is within the range of 2.5 and above which implies that business education students are highly proficient in word processing competencies.

Research Question 2: To what extent are business education students proficient on spreadsheet applications for sustainable democracy in Nigeria

Table 2: Respondents Mean rating on Spread sheet Competencies

S/N	Spreadsheet Proficiencies	Mean	SD	Remarks
23.	Ability to open a Spread Sheet application software	2.20	.76	BP
24.	Ability to plan a spread sheet	2.13	.80	BP
25.	Ability to use columns and rows	1.67	.79	BP
26.	Ability to move from cell to cell in Ms-Excel	2.45	.88	BP
27.	Ability to change Spread sheet look	2.12	.86	BP
28.	Ability to manipulate data	1.99	.76	BP
29.	Ability to produce basic spread sheet	3.00	.87	BP
30.	Ability to create an arithmetic formula	2.11	.91	BP
31.	Ability to use common excel functions	1.00	.96	BP
32.	Ability to fill formulae automatically	1.08	.85	BP

The result of the data analysis of research question 2 as shown in table 2 reveals the spreadsheet proficiency of business education students in universities in Edo state. The result of the data analysis as shown in table 2 reveals that business education students are barely proficient in spreadsheet application skills. This assertion is true since it has mean values which is within the range of 2.5 and above which implies that business education students are highly proficient in word processing competencies. This finding is in agreement with Nwokike, Ezeabii and Jim 2018 who indicates that business education lecturers highly require Microsoft word competencies.

Discussion of Findings

The present study specifically aims to examine the proficiency of business education students in word processing and spreadsheet applications for sustainable democracy in

Nigeria. Analysis from research question 1 reveals that business education students are highly proficient in word processing skills. This finding corroborates Nwokike, Ezeabii and Jim 2018 who indicates that business education lecturers highly require Microsoft word competencies. Also Stantisen (2002) states that the introduction of micro technology in particular the word processor is changing traditional office work. New skills and qualities will be required by future office personnel. Nwokike, Ezeabii and Jim 2018 also recommended that the school curriculum content is relevant to the skills (word processing competencies) required of industries because of the relevance of the programme in providing needed manpower.

The analysis of research question 2 reveals that business education students are barely proficient in spreadsheet application skills. This finding is contrary to the study conducted by Ezenwafor and Gude 2020 who stated that office technology and management graduate workers very much possessed competencies in the two applications which include word processing and spreadsheet competencies.

Conclusion

This study assessed the competencies of business education students on their proficiency on word processing and spreadsheet applications for sustainable democracy in Nigeria. From the above findings, the researcher concludes that word processing competence was highly proficient but spreadsheet competencies was grossly inadequate either as a result of inadequacy of competent lecturers, equipment and facilities, period allocation or lack of commitment on the part of the students. The knowledge of these word processing and spreadsheet competencies is highly needed by business education students for sustainable democracy. Therefore there is need for every Business Education students to be highly proficient in both word processing and spreadsheet applications. This will enhance development, thereby enhancing democracy.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. There should be recruitment of highly competent lecturers or the retraining of the existing lecturers on spreadsheet applications in order for sustainable democracy to be achieved. Also this will keep them abreast of new features of updated versions of word processing application skills.
2. Employers of labour should collaborate with training institutions on developing contents and instructional strategies for improving the word application skills of their employees that is needed for effective instructional delivery.
3. The management of the universities should make efforts to provide relevant equipment and facilities for the effective implementation of the programme

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4. NUC accreditation panels should ensure that relevant equipment/facilities as well as sustainable personnel are adequately provided before granting accreditation for the programme.

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