

A STUDY OF INTER-PERSONAL SKILLS NEEDED BY EMPLOYERS OF BUSINESS EDUCATION GRADUATES FOR ORGANIZATIONAL SYNERGY AND GOAL ACHIEVEMENT IN FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS

By

C. A. ODUMA

*Department of Business Education,
Ebonyi State University,
Abakaliki.*

Abstract

This study sought to identify inter-personal skills needed by business education graduates for organizational synergy and goal achievement in financial institutions in the South-East geopolitical zone of Nigeria. The study was a survey and made use of a 14 item structured questionnaire to gather data for the study. Data collected and analyzed revealed amongst others that the ability to accommodate other people, possession of good psychological disposition and ability to demonstrate high level of understanding are critical inter-personal components employers of labour look out for in the would-be employees.

Synergy has its origin from a Greek word “syergos”- meaning: working together. Synergy refers to the phenomenon in which two or more discrete influences or agents acting together creates an effect greater than that which is predicted by only the separate effect of the individual or part. Synergy simply means a mutual advantageous conjunction or combination where the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. It is a dynamic state in which combined action is favored over the sum of individual component actions. This implies that synergy is a phenomenon where a system that holds two or more parts, division, sections or capabilities can achieve more by integrating, combining or bringing together all the effort of its parts that it cannot achieve with the parts acting separately.

According to Desjardins (2008) every organization exists as a corporate and open system made up of various parts, divisions or departments. The understanding therefore is that as an open system, organizations can achieve more through the combined effort of the various departments. Thus, synergy as the major characteristics of a system, defines the ability of the whole organization to equal the sum of its parts. This means that organizations are able to achieve its goals more effectively and efficiently than would be possible if the parts operated separately. Organizational synergy is the performance gain that results when individuals and departments pool and coordinate their efforts and actions together.

Pristine

The language of synergy is only possible with an organized system unified with inter-personal relationship. Synergy does not thrive where there is no unity of purpose, understanding and where the readiness to pool or combine efforts is lacking. In fact, synergy implies that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. In organization terms, it means that as separate departments within an organization cooperate and interact to pool their actions, and activities, they become more productive than when each of the divisions were to act in isolation. The essential thing is that the various departmental activities and functions should be perceived as a cybernetic process. Thus, they are inter-related, inter-woven and inter-dependent. A collapse or mal-functioning of one group may definitely affect the effective functioning of the other group. In organizations, departments, divisions, or team, members create synergy by pooling their knowledge and activities together to form new alternatives.

Desjardins (2008) noted that one essential in achieving the best organizational synergy is through inter-personal relation. He described inter-personal relations as members (individual employers) who are attracted or are loyal to the group or teams. It also defines the degree to which members are motivated to remain in their group and to be influenced by one another through communication. Mutual relationship among workgroups or employees is one of the major ingredients that spur employees' loyalty and commitment in a workgroup. Inter-competence relation explains the extent to which an employee possesses the ability to create and maintain good relationship with other people. Jones and George (2003) noted that developing good relationship with superiors, subordinates and colleagues are always linked with them. Inter-personal competences help to create good working social environment. Aminu (1997) noted that interpersonal relationship among employees is a psycho-mental and a psycho-social touch that enables employees to feel at ease, feel at home and feel relieved while discharging their functions. Workgroups linked with mutual relationship and trust have a high probability of high commitment and possible high dedication than group characterized by suspicion and bickering.

One of the interesting concerns of employers of labour today is how to use communication to build employee confidence and trust in management among workgroups. In essence, employees need to possess communication skills as well. It is through this medium that trust and confidence is built. Interpersonal relationship competence therefore, conducts the spirit of confidence and trust among members of a workgroup. It is pertinent to point out here that most employees, who do not trust themselves, hardly possess inter-personal competence. According to Hisk (2005), employees with poor interpersonal competence find it difficult to work along in a group and may be identified as deviants in a workgroup. Interpersonal competence helps employees to learn and understand new ideas, new directions and instructions and to cope with the psycho-social circumstances in their work environment.

Statement of the Problem

Organizations, the world over strive to achieve performance advantage in order to increase output. This struggle has gradually become manifest following the growing rival competitions in every economic system. It is real therefore, that the realization of this target cannot be fetched without attention to employee competence and mutual relationships. Bricks (2009) noted that given conducive organizational atmosphere, employee's performances are at best the product of their mutual relationship. The forces they produce, the achievement they make are all linked to employee competence, mutual work relationship and co-existence in their work environment. Interpersonal relationship therefore, nourishes the work environment to produce the needed atmosphere for employee performance.

The purpose of this study therefore, is to identify the interpersonal skills needed by employees for organizational synergy and goal achievement.

Research Question

The study was guided by one research question; What are the interpersonal skills needed of business education graduates for organizational synergy and goal achievement?

Method

Descriptive survey design was adopted for this study. Descriptive survey is best suited for this study, as it enabled the researcher to gather information from the identified population and analyze same as they exist. The subjects of the study were chief executive officers and some managers of financial institutions in the south-East geo-political zone of Nigeria. The total population was 132.

The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire developed by the researcher after a careful determination of the focus of this study, The questionnaire contained 14 items to elicit information on the inter-personal communication skills needed of business education graduates for organizational synergy and goal achievement in financial institutions. A total of 132 copies of the instrument were distributed to the respondents. During the administration of the instrument, research assistants were used to assist the researcher. The instrument was face validated by 5 experts in the field of business education. The aim here was to ensure the suitability of the items of the instrument the purpose of the study. A total of 118 out of the 132 copies of the instrument distributed were retrieved and used for study. The mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research question. In doing this, a cut-off point of 2.5 was used as a base line score for acceptance or rejection of any of the items. Thus, any item with a mean score of 2.5 and above was considered as one of the inter-personal skills required by business education graduates for organization synergy and good attainment in financial institution. Items rating below 2.5 were discarded and were not required by business education graduates. The standard deviation was used to check the dispersion of each of the means from the grand mean.

Results

Table 1: Mean Ratings of Respondents on Inter-Personal Competencies

S/N	ITEMS	N	X̄	SD	DECISION
1.	Ability to relate positively with others	118	3.36	0.70	Accepted
2.	Ability to be empathic	118	2.63	0.61	Accepted
3.	Ability to be sympathetic	118	3.48	0.50	Accepted
4.	Possession of positive social behavior	118	3.47	0.50	Accepted
5.	Ability to be courteous	118	3.00	0.50	Accepted
6.	Ability to demonstrate high level of understanding	118	3.46	0.50	Accepted
7.	Ability to appreciate people.	118	3.50	0.51	Accepted
8.	Ability to cooperate with others	118	3.08	0.56	Accepted
9.	Possession of good moral conduct	118	3.46	0.51	Accepted
10.	Possession of good psychological disposition	118	3.48	0.52	Accepted
11.	Ability to accommodate people	118	3.47	0.50	Accepted
12.	Inability to interact with other people	118	3.03	0.56	Accepted
13.	Possession of spirit of endurance	118	3.44	0.50	Accepted
14.	Possession of sense of humor	118	3.26	0.77	Accepted

Data in the Table 1 above indicate the inter-personal relations competencies needed by employers of business education graduates for organizational synergy and goal attainment. These competencies include: the ability to relate positively with others; the ability to be sympathetic; possession of positive social behaviour; ability to demonstrate high level of understanding, possession of good moral conduct; possession of good psychological disposition, ability to accommodate people, possession of good spirit of tolerance including the possession of sense of humour. Each of these items achieved mean scores above the bench mark of 2.5 slated as the minimum score for acceptance or rejection of each of the items.

Thus, the skills noted above were accepted as being needed by employers of business education graduates for effective job performance in organizations. The employers of labour were also seen to be positively disposed towards the possession of ability to be emphatic; ability to be courteous; ability to cooperate with others; ability to appreciate people including the ability to interact with other people. The indications as noted above show that employers of business education graduates require that they possess good interpersonal relations competencies that will not only enable them gain or secure employment but assist them to perform effectively in office occupations. Stonner, Freeman and Culbert (2000) noted that interpersonal relationship competence of employees is usually enhanced through communication and group norms which result in appreciable group cohesiveness. Interpersonal relationship competence defines the ability of the business education graduates to be able to mix with other employees in a group or team work. In line with the above findings, Gore (2005) noted that job applicants' world over, especially applicants desiring employment in manufacturing, sales or advertising organizations desire to possess good interpersonal relations.

Gore (2005) further noted that the possession of interpersonal relations competence such as the ability to relate positively with others; the ability to be sympathetic, possession of high sense of humour, as well as the possession of spirit of tolerance will evidently enable the employee to function effectively in his job of interaction and discharge of varied office functions relating to sales and advancement. Similarly, Spencer and Spencer (1993) noted that one of the vital criteria being overlooked in recent the past while recruiting employees is the consideration of their interpersonal ability. They stressed that inter personal attributes such as the possession of positive social behaviour; ability to demonstrate high level of understanding, the possession of good moral conduct, including the possession of good psychological disposition and the ability to accommodate other people are relevant interpersonal components that employers of labour should of necessity consider while recruiting new employees.

These inter personal relationship components as noted by Spencer and Spencers (1993) are all in line with the findings of this study. Interestingly, Gore (2005) noted that interpersonal relations competence requires that business education graduates should possess good moral conduct, sympathy, confidence, gregariousness and demonstrable capability to work with people. To make success in interpersonal relationship competence, business education graduates must be socially active. They should be able to interact with a great number of people. In this way, they get to know other employee's problems and desires (Dave and Noel, 2002). Employers of labour expect that business education graduates need to possess good inter personal relationship competence in order to be able to discharge their functions effectively especially those routine organizational activities that boarder on public relations and interactions.

Edwin (1999) stressed that the very essence of the possession of interpersonal relations competence among employees in modern organizations is that interpersonal competence will assist the employees to gain and win understanding from employees and to influence the opinions and behaviours of organizations employees as well as to win new converts of customers to the products of the organization. The above discussions underscore the relevance of inter personal competence among business education graduates.

Conclusion:

The benefit of mutual understanding and harmony in organizations may not be felt until there is internal bickering and misunderstanding among employees. Cordial inter personal relationship among employees play a very vital role in employees performance. Thus, it facilitates understanding, cooperation and mutual interdependence among employees. Where misunderstanding exists, the task of coordination becomes difficult. Interpersonal relations are best achieved through organizational communication. Where there is communication breakdown, distrust, misconceptions and suspicions arise. These situations may negatively affect employee relationship. Nonetheless, its effect will have chain reactions on the performance of the employees.

Pristine

Thus, best performance output is better achieved where employees inter-personal relations are cordial and positive.

Recommendations

Instruction in business education is a tedious task. Much is required by the instructors and lecturers to prepare the students adequately for the world of work. This piece therefore, suggests that

- (i) Students should be enabled while in school to develop the spirit of cooperation and group activities.
- (ii) They should be enabled to appreciate and respect each others views and as well learn from their own actions and the actions and in-actions of others. Mutual co-operation is indispensable to group achievement,
- (iii) Learning facilitators should always ensure that students develop and imbibe the interpersonal relations attitude to equip them for team or group performance in the work place.

References

- Aminu, A.A. (1997). *Contemporary issues in personal management*. Maiduguri: Salone Psych-educational services
- Asika, N. (1991). *Research methodology in behavioural sciences*. Lagos:Longman Nigeria plc
- Brick, J.A. (2004). *Management information system (6th edition)*. New: Delhi: McGrawHill publishing companying
- Desjardins, J. (2008). *An Introduction to business ethics*. USA: McGraw Hill International. Publishing companying.
- Hisk, D. (2005). *The practice of competency modeling, personal psychology*. Retrieved from: www.cpass.umpon/real.call.comptenecybasedlearning. 2010-07-09.
- Jones, G.R. & George, J.M. (2003). *Contemporary management*: New York. McGrawHill Incooperated
- Tiesa, N. (2002). *Globalization of the usability engineering life cycle*. [http. //www. search. com/ reference/synergy](http://www.search.com/reference/synergy).
- Uzoagulu, A.E. (1998). *Practical guide to writing research project reports in tertiary institutions*. Enugu: John- Jacobs classic pub. Ltd.