

Relationship between E-Communication Skills of E-Leadership and Work-Based Competencies of Business Educators for Teaching of Business Education Courses in Tertiary Institutions

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Abstract: This study examined the relationship between e-communication skills and work-based competencies of business educators for teaching of business education courses in tertiary institutions in South-East Nigeria. One research question guided the study and one null hypothesis was tested. The study adopted correlation research design, and 262 business educators in the 15 public tertiary institutions in South East, Nigeria offering business education programme were studied without sampling. Two instruments namely: E-communication Skills Questionnaire (ECSQ) and “Work-based Competencies Questionnaire (WBCQ) structured in four-point rating scales were used for data collection. Face and content validity of the instrument were established by three experts in the Departments of Vocational Education and Educational Foundations of Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University. Pilot-testing was used to establish the reliability of the instruments and data collected were analyzed using Cronbach Alpha method and Coefficient value of 0.95 was obtained. The researchers and six research assistants administered 262 copies of the questionnaires to the respondents and 254 copies were correctly filled and retrieved, which indicated 97 percent return rate. Pearson product moment correlation was used for data analysis. Findings revealed moderate positive and significant relationship between e-communication skills and the work-based competencies of business educators. Based on the findings of the study, the researchers concluded that possession of e-communication skills by business educators can have a positive and significant impact on their work-based competencies leading to improved teaching effectiveness and ensuring that graduates are well-equipped for the evolving digital economy. It was recommended that management of tertiary institutions in Nigeria should organize regular professional training and development programmes for business educators focusing on e-communication tools, including virtual meeting platforms, email etiquette, and digital collaboration tools, to improve business educators' instructional delivery. The study contributed to knowledge by establishing statistical evidence on the significance of e-communication skills in shaping effective teaching and learning processes in business education programme in South-East, Nigeria.

Key Words: E-Communication Skills, Work-Based Competencies, Course Delivery, Business Educators

I. Introduction

The fast development of the Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) has substantially affected the field of education, making the adoption of ICTs critical aspect of efficient teaching that could directly impact the overall job-related competencies. ICT, or Information and Communication Technology, is a broader term for Information Technology (IT), which encompasses all communication technologies such as the internet, wireless networks, cell phones, computers, software, video-conferencing, social networking, and other media applications (Ratheeswari, 2018). ICTs are technological tools used to transmit, store, create, share, or exchange information. Educational institutions are constantly improving their instructional methods, and processes to become more adaptive and flexible in course delivery. ICTs adoption in teaching of business education courses can ensure efficient and effective course delivery as well as achievement of the goals of business education programme.

Business education is a skill-oriented academic programme offered in universities and colleges of education in Nigeria. Business education produces competent teachers for different levels of education system. Ezenwafor and Achugamonye (2018) defined business education as education about business, and for business, which equips students with functional skills for self-reliance. It focuses on courses in accounting; marketing, Office Management, Entrepreneurship, and Office Technology and Management to enable students on graduation contribute to the development of society as employees and entrepreneurs. Some goals of business education as outlined by Okoye (2021) include educating students on consumer and producer roles, understanding technological challenges, exposing students to diverse business careers, and empowering individuals with intellectual capabilities. It is doubtful if the objectives of the programme are met as many graduates of business education are not gainfully employed. Okoye and Nwagu (2022) in agreement observed that many graduates of business education lack the necessary skills for employment upon graduation.

Business education programme's success depends on the skills of business educators, who facilitate effective learning and character development. These educators should apply e-leadership and work-based competencies associated with their jobs. Udie and Nwosu (2023) defined skill as the ability to perform tasks efficiently and effectively, often acquired through training or experience. Business educators aim to provide recipients with the necessary skills to compete and survive in the global business world. Skills are generic and transferable across different work settings. ICT skills, particularly e-leadership, are demanded by business education graduates and employers. Work-based competences are required to improve teaching and learning processes, including e-leadership.

E-leadership is a blend of electronic and traditional communication methods, requiring awareness of ICTs, selective adoption, and organizational technical competence. It influences attitudes, feelings, thinking, behavior, and performance (Okechuku & Nebo, 2020). However, there is a gap between practice and implementation, and current studies are limited (Aurangzeb & Mazhar, 2019). Effective e-leadership in educational institutions involves awareness of current ICTs, selective adoption of new ones, and competence in using them. Van Wart, et al. (2019) stated that E-leadership competencies include e-communication skills, e-social skills, e-team building skills, e-change management, e-technological skills and e-trustworthiness. The INSEAD e-Leadership Competency Report (2012) lists technical, soft, cognitive, entrepreneurship, and basic competencies. This study focused on e-communication skills to address leader-follower interaction through ICTs.

E-communication skills refer to the ability to use ICT technologies very well and allow for feedback to error and untested assumptions. Roman et-al. (2018) defined e-communication skills as the ability to communicate properly through ICTs, avoiding errors or excesses that affect good performance. This ability is marked by the use of an appropriate tone, providing clear messages to employees through the right communication media. E-communication skills are essential for effective leadership in education, involving the use of ICT technology, providing feedback, and avoiding errors that can impact performance. These skills involve modifying language for online discussions, using body language, and engaging in constructive dialogue with students, colleagues, and school administration. Efficient e-communication skills require selecting the appropriate technique based on tool richness, recipient preferences, and the choice of synchronous or asynchronous communication. E-communication facilitates easier exchange of administrative and instructional information between administration, lecturers, and students. Effective leaders must communicate clearly and concisely to avoid misunderstandings, information overload, and unwanted messages, which can lead to errors, conflicts, or disengagement. E-communication involves communication from institution management to departments, lecturers to students, and vice versa. However, inability to apply these skills can lead to misunderstandings, disagreements, and hurtful feelings. Business educators need to improve team interaction, customize communications, and use rich media when appropriate.

Business educators can improve their work-based competencies and become effective classroom leaders in the digital world by developing e-communication skills. These skills are essential for high performance in educational institutions and can be cultivated through structured work-based learning (WBL) programme (Igwe et-al., 2023). Nigerian business educators must prioritize digital literacy, innovative teaching, and industry engagement to prepare students for the digital economy. E-communication skills, such as digital correspondence and online instruction, are crucial for effective teaching. However, the relationship between e-communication skills and work-based competencies is still evolving, with some institutions adopting Learning Management System and virtual conferencing tools while others struggle with infrastructural challenges. Understanding this relationship can help improve teaching methodologies and professional development programs for business educators.

Insufficient work-based competencies among Nigerian lecturers, including business educators, can lead to unemployment and hinder national economic development. Ogunboyega (2019) disclosed that employers are dissatisfied with graduates' lack of work-based competencies, hindering national competitiveness. To address this, business educators should regularly update their work-based competencies, adopt modern teaching methods, and be provided with professional development opportunities. Competent business educators are essential for achieving Nigeria's education goals, and the government outlines the production of intermediate level teachers for a minimum of three to six years (Umezulike & Anozie, 2021). To ensure the survival of Nigerian education, business educators must effectively carry out their teaching functions using new technology resources. E-communication skills, an aspect of e-leadership, requires a transformation in leadership activities and approaches. Failure to integrate e-communication skills within tertiary institutions may result in resource loss and inability to benefit from technology investments. This study examined the relationship between e-communication skills and work-based competencies of business educators for teaching business education courses in tertiary institutions in South-East, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Tertiary institutions in Nigeria aim to maintain standards, excellence in learning, and enhance their reputation in the global marketplace. E-leadership, particularly e-communication skills in teaching and learning environments, are crucial performance indicators. E-communication could positively or negatively correlate work-based competencies, but leaders must be disciplined in decision-making processes. In the globalization age, leaders must adapt to new concepts and be capable of adopting e-communication. Future leaders should possess the capacity and abilities to use e-communication, and those who own the main systems supporting e-communication will positively affect teachers' work-based competencies. Effective e-communication is necessary to accommodate changes in scientific life and accommodate new technology. However, problems that may negatively affect e-communication application include equipment shortages, lack of basic technological skills among academic staff, leaders' personality types, culture, and unwillingness to change.

Work-based competencies, which include instructional delivery, classroom management, curriculum development, and student engagement, could be crucial for business educators to achieve desired teaching goals. The shift toward digital learning environments necessitates that business educators not only possess e-communication skills but also integrate them effectively into their teaching practices. However, there is limited empirical evidence on how e-communication skills directly impact these work-based competencies, particularly in business education. Furthermore, while some institutions in South-East Nigeria have adopted digital learning management systems and online communication tools, disparities in access to technology, digital literacy levels, and institutional support may affect the extent to which business educators can effectively utilize e-communication skills for course

delivery. This gap raises concerns about whether business educators are adequately equipped to adapt to the digital transformation of education and whether their skills in e-communication enhances or limits their work-based competencies. Given these concerns, this study specifically examined (1) the relationship between e-communication skills and work-based competencies of business educators for course delivery in South-East Nigerian tertiary institutions.

Research Question

The following research question guided this study;

1. What is the relationship between e-communication skills and work-based competencies of business educators for teaching of business education courses in tertiary institutions in South-East, Nigeria?

Hypothesis

The following null hypothesis was formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance:

1. There is no significant relationship between e-communication skills and work-based competencies of business educators for teaching of business education courses in tertiary institutions in South-East, Nigeria.

II. Method

The study adopted correlational research design. It was carried out in South East Nigeria.

The study involved 262 business educators from 15 public tertiary institutions offering business education programme in South-East Nigeria. The total population was used without sampling since it was manageable and reachable. Two instruments namely E-communication Skills Questionnaire (ECSQ)" and "Work-based Competencies Questionnaire (WBCQ) were used to collect data for the study. The ECSQ consisted of Sections A and B. Section A elicited demographic information of the respondents such as gender, ownership of institution and type of institution while Section B had 11 items covering e-communication. Section C which is "Work-based Competencies Questionnaire (WBCQ)" contained of 18 items. The respondents were requested to rate the items in ECSQ and WBCQ on a four-point rating scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), Strongly Disagree (SD) 4, 3, 2, 1, respectively.

The instruments were subjected to face and content validation by three experts: two from the business education unit of Department of Vocational Education and one from measurement and evaluation unit of the Department of Educational Foundations, Chukwumeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Igbariam Campus, Anambra State. To establish the reliability of the instrument, the pilot test method was used, and data collected were analyzed using Cronbach Alpha method to determine the internal consistency of the item with reliability co-efficient value of 0.95 obtained. The researchers administered copies of the instrument to the respondents in their institutions with the help of six research assistants adequately briefed on the method of administration and collection of the instrument. Out of 262 copies of the questionnaire distributed, 254 (97%) copies were correctly filled and returned, which was used for data analysis. Pearson Product Moment correlation co-efficient was used to answer the research question and test the null hypothesis. A decision rule on the questionnaire items and the research questions were based on the co-efficient (r) and the size of the relationship was interpreted using the interpretation of a correlation co-efficient by Schober et.al (2018). For hypotheses, a null hypothesis was rejected where the P-value is less than the 0.05 level of significance. Conversely, where the P-value is greater than or equal to the level of significance (0.05), the null hypothesis was accepted.

III. Results

Research Question 1: What is the relationship between e-communication skills and work-based competencies of business educators for teaching of business education courses in tertiary institutions in South-East, Nigeria?

Table 1: Summary of Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient analysis on the relationship between e-communication skills and work-based competencies of business educators for teaching of business education

		E-communication skills	Work-based competencies of business educators	Decision
E-communication skill	Pearson Correlation	1	0.53**	
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.00	Moderate positive relationship
	N	254	254	
Work-based competencies of business educators	Pearson Correlation	0.53**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.00		
	N	254	254	
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).				

The summary result of Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient analysis from the Table 1 above showed a moderate positive relationship between e-communication skills and work-based competencies of business educators for teaching of business education courses in tertiary institutions in South-East, Nigeria, with ' r ' = 0.53** and N = 254. This revealed positive correlation coefficient value of 0.53** indicated a moderate positive relationship between e-communication skills and work-based competencies of business educators for teaching of business education courses in tertiary institutions in South-East, Nigeria.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between e-communication skills and work-based competencies of business educators for teaching of business education courses in tertiary institutions in South-East, Nigeria.

Table 2: Test of Significance of Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient on relationship between e-communication skills and work-based competencies of business educators for teaching of business education courses

		e-communication skills	work-based competencies of business educators	Decision
E-communication skills	Pearson Correlation	1	0.53**	
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.00	Significant
	N	254	254	
Work-based competencies of business educators	Pearson Correlation	0.53**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.00		
	N	254	254	
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.05level (2-tailed).				

The result of the test of significance of Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient from Table 2 above showed a significant relationship between e-communication skill and work-based competencies of business educators for teaching of business education courses in tertiary institutions in South-East, Nigeria with r = 0.53** N = 254 and p -value = 0.000. Since p -value (0.000) is less than 0.05, the study rejects the null hypothesis and do not reject the alternative hypothesis that there is a significant relationship between e-communication and work-based competencies of business educators for teaching of business education courses in tertiary institutions in South-East, Nigeria.

IV. Discussion of Findings

Findings of the study revealed a moderate positive relationship between e-communication skills and work-based competencies of business educators for teaching of business education courses in tertiary institutions in South-East, Nigeria. Findings of this study aligns with the earlier findings of Nwosu and Okonkwo (2020) which found that digital communication proficiency enhances lecturers' ability to interact with students, provide timely feedback, and manage virtual classrooms effectively. Similarly, Onyema and Ugochukwu (2021) noted that educators with strong e-communication skills are better positioned to facilitate interactive learning experiences and improve student comprehension in business education. Eze and Uzochukwu (2021) noted that e-communication skills are critical for modern business educators because it allows for successful digital contact, online collaboration, and efficient dissemination of course contents. The authors contended that these abilities are critical for distant and hybrid learning methods, especially in today's technologically driven business education programme. The finding also agrees with that of Akiti and Onyemah (2022) who revealed that moderate positive relationship between e-communication skills and work-based competencies enhance the acquisition of digital skills among business education graduates for self-reliance in a changing world. It also agrees with the study of Ubulom and Omu (2021) who reported that business education graduates are competent in the use of certain digital communication skills. Similarly, Ajayi and Adebayo (2023) asserted that business educators must have work-based competencies in instructional design, digital literacy, industry-specific knowledge, and assessment approaches. However, the moderate relationship observed in the study could be explained by the fact that while e-communication skills are valuable, they alone do not fully determine business educators' work-based competencies. This aligns with Eze and Chukwu (2019), who argued that additional competencies – such as problem-solving skills, adaptability, and industry-specific knowledge are essential for effective teaching in business education programmes.

Findings of the study revealed that the relationship between e-communication skills and work-based competencies of business educators for teaching of business education courses in tertiary institutions in Nigeria was significant. This could be attributed to the fast integration of digital resources into business education programme, which has changed the way business educators organize, deliver, and evaluate instruction. Eze and Nwosu (2021) reported that the ability to effectively use e-communication tools directly influences educators' work-related competencies, as digital interaction has become an integral aspect of modern education. Eze and Nwosu's research highlighted that tertiary institutions that provide continuous training on e-communication technologies witness a significant improvement in educators' confidence, instructional quality, and overall job performance. Sergeeva et-al. (2023) revealed that there was a significant positive relationship between participants' perceived competence in communication skills and

their information and communication technology competencies (ICTCs). This implies that business educators have adequate application of e-communication skills and work-based competencies for teaching of business education courses in tertiary institutions in South-East, Nigeria.

V. Conclusion

The study demonstrated a significant, albeit moderate, positive relationship between e-communication skills and the work-based competencies of business educators in South-East Nigerian tertiary institutions. This suggests that while e-communication plays a vital role in enhancing business educators' effectiveness in teaching business education courses, other factors also contribute significantly to their overall competencies. Based on these findings, the researcher concluded that possession of e-communication skills by business educators can have a positive and significant impact on their work-based competencies leading to improved teaching effectiveness and ensure graduates are well-equipped for the evolving digital economy.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendation was made:

1. Management of tertiary institutions in Nigeria should organize regular professional training and development programmes for business educators focusing on e-communication tools, including virtual meeting platforms, email etiquette, and digital collaboration tools, to improve business educators' instructional delivery.

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