



RESEARCH ARTICLE

VOCATIONAL TRAINING DURATION AND UNIVERSITY GRADUATES' JOB PERFORMANCE
IN CROSS RIVER STATE, NIGERIA

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ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received 04th April, 2018
Received in revised form
19th May, 2018
Accepted 27th June, 2018
Published online 31st July, 2018

Key Words:

Duration of training,
Vocation,
Vocational training,
University graduates,
Job Performance.

ABSTRACT

This study focused specifically on determining the extent to which duration of vocational training influence university graduates job performance in baking and computer business enterprises respectively. In achieving this, two research questions were raised and two research hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. The study adopted a descriptive survey design. The population of this study include a total of 123 baking business and 208 computer business centres in the Area. Out of this population, a proportionate stratified sampling technique was used to select 10% resulting in the selection of 12 baking and 21 computer business centres. A simple random sampling technique was adopted to select 36 and 63 graduate-workers from baking and computer business enterprises respectively, resulting in a sample of 99 respondents. A rating scale was used as the instrument for data collection. The instrument was administered by the researchers. The data obtained, were analysed using descriptive statistics, while the hypotheses were tested at .05 level of significance using one-way analysis of variance (One-Way ANOVA). The results of the analysis revealed that duration of vocational training influenced university graduates job performance in baking and computer business enterprises respectively. Discussions, conclusion and recommendation were all made based on the findings of the study.

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Citation: Odigwe, Francisca N., Offem, Odimekoto; and Owan, Valentine Joseph, 2018. "Vocational training duration and university graduates' job performance in cross river state, Nigeria", *International Journal of Current Research*, 10, (07), 72024-72028.

INTRODUCTION

Graduates job productivity and performance have been a serious problem in the Nigerian society in the past few decades. Many graduates cannot replicate their knowledge and skills in practical situations, which has made many situational analysts to question and scrutinize the effectiveness of our university system. Vocational education was introduced in Nigeria as a means of providing opportunities for individuals to acquire life skills that will make him/her useful to himself/herself, and to the nation at large. Vocational Education and Training (VET) refers to education and training that focuses on delivering skills and knowledge required for specific industries (State of Queensland, 2015). VET is the part of tertiary education and training which provides accredited training in job related and technical skills. It covers a large number of careers and industries like trades and office work, retail, hospitality and technology that is required by the industry. The courses are offered as per the demand and the need of the people especially in the field of agriculture, engineering, health, tourism management and computer skills.

Ndelle (2015) noted that the specific role of VET is particularly relevant for firms in the economic sector. One can expect that general education affects national economic growth substantially through 'soft' variables such as social capital, whereas VET has a more direct influence on productivity, and hence on economic benefits which are measurable at company or sector level. The benefits of investment in vocational education and training (VET) for firms have been the subject of several studies. To date, most studies on the economic benefits of education have used either general variables, such as the number of years spent in initial education, or specific data about training of employees. However, when we look at the economic benefits of education at company or private sector level, a difference should be made between initial general and vocational education, and measures of training should be included to enable a comparison between the benefits of different types of VET. Knowledge about which kind of training brings the greatest returns, and upon which factors these returns depend is valuable for the future of the economic sectors and firms. The aim is to provide certain professional and vocational skills to the people who are unable to gain higher education or are interested in gaining certain vocational/professional skills to better their professional career (Council for Technical Education and Vocational Training,

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Many Government, semi-Government, private sectors, NGOs and INGOs who offer vocational education and trainings are producing semi-skilled and skilled workforce through VET trainings. In addition, many developed and developing countries have been providing vocational education and training in various skills. VET covers a wide range of careers and industries, including trade and office work, retail, hospitality and technology. VET programs provide an education that directly relates to getting a job. VET courses are typically shorter and more practical than higher education courses and have an industry and trade focus related to the job market. As VET focuses on skill acquisition, also known as "skill-based training," the training concentrates on developing and applying specific skills and behaviours, the learners must spend the majority of their training time engaged in learning, developing, and practicing skills in a variety of practical and real-life scenarios. After completing the VET courses and training, the skilled worker should be able to perform the tasks independently and perform a wide variety of tasks in different work environments and navigate between the planning and execution processes. The ultimate objective of skilled training is not only to enable the learner to acquire proficiency in the skill, but to have the confidence to competently apply it on the job. Vocational education also prepares people for a career that is based in manual practical activities and focus specifically, on a skill. It is also referred to as Career and Technical Education as it can help to develop a particular group of techniques and become proficient in a particular technology area (Basnet, 2012). However, though the well-designed courses and training have been adopted, the problem in the current situation is that industries are suffering from the effects of unskilled workers. The problem today with many workplace training programs is that only partial success is achieved because training is separated from the industrial success (Educational International, 2009).

Training factors that impact on the effectiveness of workers include: insufficient time for learning, poor practical learning experiences, improper implementation of designed policies and programmes, and duration of training. Training duration refers to how long it takes one to acquire a skill. Many university graduates are not doing well in business enterprises because of many reasons, one of which is poor training duration. Training perse refers to a systematic and well-planned process of monitoring, evaluating, and deciding the timeframe that is needed to complete any vocational courses in order to acquire the right skills, and increase efficiency on the job. Therefore, vocational training duration will be seen as the pathway through which somebody decides in advance what vocational skill to acquire, when to acquire it, what it takes to acquire it and how long it will take to learn and master the art of that vocation. There are many vocations from which anybody can choose. The areas of focus in this paper were specifically (a) Baking and (b) Computer vocations. Baking is a vocation that exposes learners to the insights of using heat and its related technologies to produce food for human consumption and satisfaction. Areas of baking include cake making, bread production, small chops, pastries, egg/meat/fish/potatoes roll etc. Computer on the other hand, is a very powerful and sophisticated electronic device that receives input through many sources (keyboard, mouse, joystick, scanner, flash drives etc.) as data, process them into meaningful information, and brings out desired results (output) in either soft or hard copies.

There are numerous areas of computer vocation including data analysis, graphics, word processing, networking, programming to mention a few.

Statement of the problem: It can be recalled that the essence for the provision of vocational education or training was to provide practical and psychomotor skills to learners which will in turn lead to societal development and innovations. It was believed that with these skills present in the lives of Nigerians, the nation will become self-reliant and more productive. Sadly, not every university or tertiary institution in Nigeria has imbibed nor integrated fully, vocational training and its curriculum into their various systems. The few Nigerian universities that have made attempts to adopt vocational training or entrepreneurship, are not providing enough duration for undergraduates to focus, learn and acquire the relevant skills. Many Universities including the University of Calabar for instance, run such training for only a semester where year three students combine it with their regular courses. How can students learn such skills while combining with other regular courses that are in themselves, very demanding? The poor productivity of Nigerian graduates in their respective places of work when employed to carry out vocational duties further indicates a problem. Given the immense benefit of vocational training and its applicability to the workplace, and the poor duration and timing allotted for training the university undergraduates, this study was designed in an attempt to find out whether the perceived poor performance of university graduates in business enterprises is as a result of improper vocational training duration.

Objectives of the Study: The major objective of this study was to examine the influence of vocational training duration and university graduates job performance in business enterprises in Cross River State. Specifically, this study sought to:

- i. Examine the extent to which vocational training duration influence university graduates' performance in baking business enterprises.
- ii. Examine the extent to which vocational training duration influence university graduates' performance in computer business enterprises.

Research Questions: The following research questions have been posed to guide the study.

- i. To what extent does duration of vocational training influence university graduates' performance in baking business enterprises?
- ii. To what extent does duration of vocational training influence university graduates' performance in computer business enterprises?

Research Hypotheses: The hypotheses below were formulated:

- i. Vocational training duration has no significant influence on university graduates job performance in baking business enterprises.
- ii. Vocational training duration has no significant influence on university graduates job performance in computer business enterprises.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Several studies have been conducted in an attempt to explain the role of training on employee performance.

For example, (Amir and Amen, 2013) aimed at studying the effect of training on employees' performance and to provide suggestions as to how firms can improve their employees' performance through effective training programs. The research approach adopted for the study conforms to qualitative research, as it reviewed the literature and multiple case studies on the importance of training in enhancing the performance of the workforce. The theoretical framework and models related to employee development through training and development programs, and its effect on employee performance were presented. On the basis of the reviewed evidence of such a relationship, suggestions were offered for the top management in all businesses to assess the employee performance and find out the true cause(s) of performance problems so that such problems could be solved in time through desired training program. They added that the main objective of every training session is to add value to the performance of the employees, hence all types of business should design training and development programs for their employees as a continuous activity. The purpose of training is what employees would acquire after experiencing the training program. Some of the organizations plan and implement the training program for their employees without identifying the purpose and objectives and without knowing what the knowledge, skills and abilities employees would gain at the end of the training program and whether they will be able to attain performance targets on the job. Therefore, firm must first of all, design the training program with clear goals and objectives while keeping in mind the particular needs of both the individual and the firm. Training plays vital role in the building of competencies of new as well as current employees to perform their job in an effective way. It also prepares employees to hold future position in an organization with full capabilities and helps to overcome the deficiencies in any job-related areas. Effective training is considered to be a key factor for improved performance; as it can enhance the level of employee and firm competency. It helps to fill the gap between expected and current performance, i.e. gap between desired performance and actual employee performance (Amir and Amen, 2013).

There are different methods of overcoming deficiencies in employee performance on the job, and training is one of them. In particular, training develops skills, competency, and ability and ultimately improves employee performance and organizational productivity. The training program is the stimulant that workers require to improve their performance and capabilities, which consequently increases organizational productivity. Therefore, training should be designed on the basis of firm specific needs and objectives. Effective training is the thoughtful intervention designed at attaining the learning necessary for upgraded employee performance. The research affirmed the proposition that training has a positive impact on employee performance (Ahmad and Bakar, 2003; Bartel, 1994). Reported that there is a positive correlation between an effective training program and employee productivity. However, to make it possible (Swart *et al.*, 2015), posited that it is the responsibility of the managers to identify the factors that hinder training program effectiveness and take necessary measures to neutralize their effect on employee performance. In addition, (Ahmad and Bakar, 2003), concluded that a high level of employee commitment is achieved if the training achieves the learning outcomes and improves the performance, both on individual and organizational level. These findings are also consistent with the results of Kim's (Kim, 2006) research work. Presently Nigeria is offering education in general subjects,

but to achieve development, it must offer a variety of courses for specific disciplines such as technical, vocational, professional, agricultural, and so on, because the country needs a balanced distribution of manpower for all professions so that the vast population of Nigeria can contribute to economic growth by participating in different professions (Oranu, 2010). This implies that Vocational and Technical Education (VTE) systems play a crucial role in the social and economic development of any nation. Owing to their dynamic nature, they are continuously subject to the forces driving change in the schools, industry and society. Mechanized farming requires technical skills that could be obtained in technical and vocational schools. Although technical and vocational education seem deficient in 'citizenship or leadership training,' it provides students with "life skills." (Asogwa and Diogwu, 2007) asserted that, to become productive entrepreneurs requires creative and innovative ideas, as well as increased personal freedom. It can be said that performance is a manifestation of work done by employees who are usually used as a basis for assessment of employees or organizations. Good performance is a step toward achieving organizational goals. Therefore, efforts should be made to improve performance. But this is not easy because many factors affect the high or low performance of a person. Performance is a result achieved by a person as applicable to the work in question. From some of these descriptions, it can be argued that performance is the real work achieved by a person in carrying out the tasks assigned to him/her in accordance with the criteria and objectives set by the organization. Elements of performance assessed are as follows: (1) Loyalty, (2) Job performance, (3) Responsibility, (4) Obedience, (5) Honesty, (6) Initiatives, (7) Leadership, (8) Efficiency (9) Speed in task completion (10) Productivity (11) Independent discharge of duties. From some of these descriptions, it can be argued that performance is the real work achieved by a person in carrying out the tasks assigned to him in accordance with the criteria and objectives set by the organization (Basnet, 2012). As earlier stated, several studies have been conducted in the area of training and development with almost each making attempts to explain the important role training plays in any organization. However, there are limited studies which focus on vocational training and job performance. Also, there is a serious research gap in the literature. No study has been conducted to the best of our knowledge in the area of employee job performance especially in Cross River State. It is an attempt to fill this gap that necessitated this study.

METHODS

The study employed an ex-post facto research design since the phenomena studied, have already occurred. This study was carried out in Ikom local Government Area of Cross River State. The population of the study was all the baking industries and computer business centres/personnel in Ikom Local Government Area of Cross River, Nigeria. There are 123 baking business and 208 computer business centres in the Area, spanning across several communities in her jurisdiction. From this population, a proportionate stratified sampling technique was used to select 10% of the available baking and computer business centres respectively for the study. Therefore, 12 baking industries and 21 computer business centres respectively, were used. A simple random sampling technique was adopted to select 3 workers and 1 manager each from all the business centres selected for this study. The total

number of participants selected for this study include 99 graduate-workers (36 from baking businesses and 63 from computer businesses), and 33 managers (12 from baking business and 21 from computer business centres). A 10-item rating scale was the instrument used for data collection. The instrument was designed in two sections – A and B. Section A was designed to be filled by the graduate-workers as a means of obtaining demographic information from them. Section B comprised of 10 items organized on a 5-point rating scale which was designed to be filled by managers of each selected business centre, as a means of rating the three selected graduate-workers. The instrument was administered by the researchers to all the selected centres on different days. All the instruments administered, were completely filled and retrieved immediately for analysis. The data obtained were analysed using descriptive statistics, while the hypotheses were tested using one-way analysis of variance (One-Way ANOVA) at .05 level of significance or 95 per cent confidence interval.

to their training duration. Table 2 presents the job performance indices of university graduates in computer business enterprises in accordance to their training duration.

HO₁: Vocational training duration has no significant influence on university graduates job performance in baking business enterprises.

From Table 4, the calculated F-value 726.3118 is greater than the critical values 2.5787 at 0.05 significance level of significance and 49 degrees of freedom. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected implying that vocational training duration has a significant influence on university graduates job performance in baking business enterprises in Cross River State.

HO₂: Vocational training duration has no significant influence on university graduates job performance in computer business enterprises.

Table 1. Summary of Results Showing Baking Graduates Training duration and their Job Performance

Job performance indicators	Duration of training in months				
	Three	Six	Nine	Twelve	Above Twelve
Punctuality to work	44	78	0	18	5
Performance of assigned duties	28	76	0	18	5
Knowledge of the business	31	69	0	19	4
Performance of duties according to rules	26	76	0	18	4
Contribution to the business enterprise.	29	78	0	17	4
Cooperation with others to carryout tasks.	29	64	0	20	4
Commitment to work.	34	74	0	18	5
Relationship with customers	35	69	0	19	5
Speed in performing duties.	41	80	0	16	5
Accuracy in performance of duties	34	75	0	15	4

Table 2. Summary of Results Showing Computer Graduates Training duration and their Job Performance

Job performance indicators	Duration of training (in months)				
	Three	Six	Nine	Twelve	Above Twelve
Punctuality to work	60	109	0	11	0
Performance of assigned duties	66	121	0	14	0
Knowledge of the business	72	118	0	12	0
Performance of duties according to rules	62	120	0	13	0
Contribution to the business enterprise.	69	137	0	11	0
Cooperation with others to carryout tasks.	67	129	0	11	0
Commitment to work.	67	128	0	14	0
Relationship with customers	60	135	0	12	0
Speed in performing duties.	68	128	0	11	0
Accuracy in performance of duties	60	137	0	13	0

Table 3. Summary of descriptive statistics results showing the duration of training and the performance of university graduates in baking business enterprises

Duration of Vocational training	Count	Sum	Average	Variance
Three months	10	331	33.1	33.43
Six months	10	739	73.9	25.21
Nine months	10	0	0	0
Twelve months	10	178	17.8	2.18
Above Twelve	10	45	4.5	0.28

Table 5. Summary of descriptive statistics results showing the duration of training and the performance of university graduates in baking business enterprises.

Duration of vocational training	Count	Sum	Average	Variance
Three Months	10	651	65.1	18.54
Six months	10	1262	126.2	83.73
Nine Months	10	0	0	0
Twelve	10	122	12.2	1.511
Above twelve	10	0	0	0

Table 4. One-way ANOVA results of the influence of duration of vocational training and University Graduates Job performance in baking business enterprises.

Source of Variation	SS	Df	MS	F	F crit.
Between Groups	35502.12	4	8875.53	726.3118	2.5787
Within Groups	549.9	45	12.22		
Total	36052.02	49			

* $\alpha = .05$

RESULTS

From Table 1, the performance of graduates in baking business enterprises has been shown under various indicators in relation

Table 6. One-way ANOVA results of the influence of duration of vocational training and University Graduates Job performance in computer business enterprises

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	F crit.
Between Groups	120308.4	4	30077.1	1448.956	2.5787
Within Groups	934.1	45	20.75778		
Total	121242.5	49			

From Table 6, it can be inferred that the calculated F-values 1448.956 is greater than the critical F-values 2.5787 at 0.05 significance level. Therefore, the null is rejected implying that vocational training duration has a significant influence on

university graduates job performance in computer business enterprises in Cross River State.

DISCUSSION

The findings of the study revealed that the job performance of graduates in baking and computer business enterprises, were influenced significantly by the duration of vocational training. The duration spent during training did account for their good or bad performance in both business enterprises. However, those who spent six months displayed higher job performance in both business enterprises as revealed in table 3 and table 5 respectively. This result might perhaps be depending on the individual differences, the quality of the instructor and his instruction, the facilities used in teaching and the curriculum content; or perhaps the enterprise in which they worked and even, the leadership abilities of the manager. The tools available to work with could have contributed to their effectiveness and efficiency level. The findings of this study however, places much emphasis on proper training of employees. The findings of this study agree with that of (Basnet, 2012), who revealed that there is a positive correlation between an effective training program and employee productivity. However, to make it possible (Swart *et al.*, 2015), posited that it is the responsibility of the managers to identify the factors that hinder training program effectiveness and take necessary measures to neutralize their effect on employee performance. The findings of this study also have a relationship with the statement (Amir and Amen, 2003) who disclosed that training plays vital role in the building of competencies of new as well as current employees to perform their job in an effective way. It also prepares employees to hold future position in an organization with full capabilities and helps to overcome the deficiencies in any job-related areas. Effective training is considered to be a key factor for improved performance; as it can enhance the level of employee and firm competency. It helps to fill the gap between expected and current performance, i.e. gap between desired performance and actual employee performance. However, the findings of this study are limited to the followings: it was conducted using just a few business enterprises in one local government area; it relied on the rating from each business manager, meaning that the results are valid to the extent of information provided by these managers.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, we conclude that the performance of university graduates in baking business enterprises is influenced by the duration of training. It has also been established through the findings of this study that the performance of university graduates in computer business enterprises is also influenced by the duration of training. The findings of this study regard the fact that training is pivotal in effective job performance of employees. We also conclude generally that, the amount of time spent during training influences the job performance of university graduates in baking and computer businesses. However, other factors such as quality of training, quality of the trainer, quality of the tools used to train, and the training environment are very important in the training process.

Recommendations: Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

- i. Emphasis should be given to the duration of training in any business enterprise. This will ensure that products from such training, perform maximally and efficiently on-the-job.
- ii. The government and all other relevant stake holders should support the universities by supplying adequate baking and computer facilities that can be used for practical training of students in these vocations.
- iii. Undergraduates should ensure that they utilize any opportunity offered to them to learn a skill by being motivated and dedicated to it. All forms of distraction should be avoided.
- iv. Factors such as quality of training, quality of the trainer, quality of the tools used to train, and the training environment are very important in the training process; and should be considered before kick-starting any training program.

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