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## **Team Work Competences Needed by Business Education Graduate Employees for Effective Job Performance in Organizations** (Pp. 237-245)

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### **Abstract**

*This study sought to find out team-work competencies needed by business education graduate employees to function effectively in business organizations. The study was a survey and carried out using 150 business executives as respondents. A 14 item questionnaire was used to gather data. Mean scores and standard deviation were used for data analysis. The study revealed amongst others that business education graduate employees need to possess clusters of team work competencies as pre-condition for gainful employment and for optimum performance in offices. It was recommended amongst others that comparative teaching and instruction should be introduced in the business education programme.*

## **Introduction**

A team is either a temporary or an ongoing task group whose members are charged with working together to identify problems, from a consensus about what should be done and implement necessary actions in relation to a particular task (Bartol and Martins, 1994). Bartol and Martins noted two characteristics of a team to include: team members typically identify problems in a given area; they not only reach a consensus of what should be done but actually go ahead to implement the decisions of the team. In this direction, work team is defined as two or more people who perform inter-related and inter-dependent activities, and who influence each other towards achieving a common purpose (Stonner, Gilbert and Freeman, 2000). On the other hand, Gareth and George (2000) saw work team as a group whose members work intensely with each other to achieve a specific common goal or objective. Gareth and George further noted that two characteristics that distinguish work teams are the intensity with which the team members work together and the presence of a specific over-riding work team goals or objectives.

Work team in this study is perceived as a group of employees who work closely together in an organization and who are bound together by common targets in their work place. For a group or team to function effectively, each member needs to possess the requisite skills needed for effective performance. Team work competence therefore, defines the ability of an employee to be able to work in a group or team. Davis (2000) noted that not all employees can cope in a team or group assignment. Those who do not possess the needed performance competence cannot function well in a team.

Team work competence therefore, demands that for a prospective employee to function effectively in a team, the individual needs to possess superior intelligence. The employee equally needs to be divergent in approaches and in handling technical issues and problems in special areas to the extent that can ginger team work for greater performance. Thus, team work competence will assist to spur and sustain performance and the confidence members have in each other. This is very essential if the team must work intensely to achieve a common target.

Bartol and Martins (1994) noted that if work team members do not possess the requisite performance competence, such a team is bound to suffer the dangers of social loafing. Bartol and Martins (1994) defined social loafing as the tendency of work team members to expend less effort when working in a

group or team than when alone. It is the tendency of individuals to put forth less effort when they work in a team than when they work alone. The dangers of social loafing in a group can be eliminated by making each team member contribute effectively to the team (i.e. through division of labour); by emphasizing the valuable contribution of individual members (i.e. through performance) and by keeping team size. It is pertinent to point out here that for an individual employee to effectively function in a team; such an employee should possess the requisite performance competence (Gareth and George, 2001).

Since members of a team do work intensely together, teams can sometimes be difficult to form and it may take time for members to learn how to effectively work together. Team work can help organizations gain a competitive advantage because they can enhance organizational performance; increase organizational responsiveness to customers; increase innovation; increase employee motivation and satisfaction (Stonner, Gilbert and Freeman, 2000). The authors further noted that one of the main advantages of team work is the opportunity to generate a positive synergy. Synergy defines a situation where people working in a team are able to produce more or higher quality output than would have been produced if each person had worked separately and all their individual efforts were combined (Bartol and Martins, 1994). The essence of team synergy is captured in the saying “the whole is more than the sum of parts”. Factors that can contribute to team synergy as well as enable organizations gain competitive advantage through team work include: ability of members to intelligently bounce ideas of one another, ability of members to correct each other’s mistake; ability of members to bring diverse knowledge base to bear on a problem or goal, as well as the ability of members to accomplish a work that is too vast or all encompassing for individuals to achieve on their own. To take advantage of the potential for team work synergy, employees need to make sure that team works are composed of members who possess complementary skills and knowledge. Gareth and George (2001) noted that these factors (complementary skills and knowledge) are part of the elements that define the competence of team members and thus constitute their relevant skills to enable them function effectively in their team work.

### **Statement of the problem**

Organizational field functions are mainly characterized by team work activities. Employees’ activities therefore, are often grouped and they are expected to discharge their functions in groups rather than in isolation.

Organizations in this instance are faced with the onerous task of integrating their employees to gain the work team cohesion needed for both departmental and field activities. Team work cohesion is essentially needed in organizations to achieve employee work performance synergy and shun social loafing among employees or members of a work team. Unfortunately, work teams or groups are difficult to fuse together to gain the needed group cohesion. Specifically, some employees lack the needed team work competencies to achieve mutual cooperation and inter-dependence. Often, there has been leakages and difficulties in employee work team, thus, giving way to social loafing, employee distrust and in fact, low performance as most employees lack team work competencies. In the face of these perennial difficulties often experienced in work teams, the problem of this study is: What are the team work competencies needed by business education graduate employees for effective job performance in business organizations. The specific purpose of this study therefore, is to identify the team work competencies needed by business education graduate employees for effective job performance in organizations.

### **Significance of the study**

The findings of this study will be of relevance to students and lecturers alike. To the students, it will serve as a good source of information on Team Work Competencies needed to function effectively as employees in organizational environment. It will equally help them to extend their horizon of knowledge and understanding on team work competencies. Above all, students will find this study a good reference material in their research work that is related to Team Work Competencies. To the lecturers, the study will serve as a good source document and information pack for both research and instruction. Specifically, it will assist lecturers in helping students to develop the needed Team Work Competencies through instruction.

### **Research question**

This study was guided by one research question: What are the Team Work Competencies needed by business education graduate employees for effective job performance in organizations?

### **Scope of the study**

The study is limited to finding out the team work competencies needed by business education graduate employees for effective performance in parastatals and business organizations in Anambra State Nigeria. The subjects of the study included business education graduate employees in the

parastatals and business organizations studied. They equally constituted the respondents to the research question.

### **Method**

The descriptive survey design was adopted for this study. The descriptive survey design focuses on population or its universe. It involves a onetime observation of independent and non-manipulative variables (Asika, 1991). In this type of research, data are usually in their natural setting without interfering with the variables (Uzoagulu, 1998). Thus, a descriptive survey was best suited for this study. The instrument for data collection in this study was a structured questionnaire developed by the researchers after a careful determination of the focus of this study, its purpose and research question. The questionnaire contained 14 items to elicit information on the team work competencies needed by business education graduates for effective job performance in business organizations. A total of 150 copies of the questionnaire were distributed to the respondents. During the administration of the instrument, research assistants were used. The instrument was carefully face validated by five experts in the field of business education. The aim here was to ensure that the experts vet the suitability of the items of the instrument to the purpose of the study. A total of 133 out of the 150 copies of the instrument distributed were retrieved and used for data analysis. The mean and the 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 each of the items. Thus, any item with a mean score of 2.5 and above was considered as one of the team work competencies required by business education graduates for effective job performance in business organizations. 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**

Results of data in table 1 indicate the following as the components of team work competences needed by business education graduate employees for effective job performance in business organizations. These competences include: the possession of high achievement drive, possession of high business technical ability, possession of conceptual skill, ability to intelligently advice others; the ability to create conducive work environment; ability to cope under stress, ability to be committed in group task, and the ability to shun social loafing; Each of these competences recorded the following mean scores: 3.45; 3.41; 3.35; 3.55; 3.44; 3.35; 3.46; 3.43; 3.33

and 3.41 respectively. Each of these scores are above 2.5 bench mark score for accepting or rejecting any of the items. Thus, they were accepted by business education graduate employees for effective job performance in organizations.

On the contrary, other items like inability to be task result oriented, inability to work in a group, inability to spur work force to perform, possession of poor social skills, were discarded or rejected by business education graduates employees and, thus, regarded as slightly preferred. Nonetheless, each of the items rejected recorded mean scores below 2.5 used as a bench mark score for acceptance or rejection of each of the items. Since each of their mean scores is below 2.5, they were seen as having no bearing to the effective performance of business education graduate employees in organizations hence the basis of their rejection.

The above implies that business education graduate employees need to possess clusters of team work competencies as pre-condition for gainful employment and for higher performance in establishments and organizations. Work team therefore, is a group whose members work cooperatively and intensively with each other to achieve a specific common goal or objectives. Ericson (2001), noted that graduates of higher business schools should possess the competence to work in a team because team work enhances organizational performance, increases organizational responsiveness to customers, increases innovation and employees motivation and satisfaction. Dave and Noel (2002) noted that the possession of high achievement drive; personal confidence; high business technical ability; conceptual skills as well as the ability to advice others and create conducive work environment in a group are the fundamental components of team work competencies required of a business education graduates.

These opinions are all in agreement with the findings of the present study. Furthermore, Ralph (2001) stressed that business education graduate employees should always strive to achieve set goals and other specific objectives of their work group. In other words, they should possess team work group competencies to enable them in their various tasks. Ralph (2001) further emphasized that business education graduates should possess group work competencies such as the ability to cope under stress; as well as the possession of high achievement drive. Ralph while stressing on the relevance of the components of team work competencies outlined above, noted with regret that social loafing is the tendency of employees to expend less effort

when working in groups or teams than when working alone. He noted that social loafing for instance will negatively undermine group work synergy. The implication of the above discussion is that business education graduates should possess a philosophy of life that leads to action with desirable character. They should possess reasonably good health and physical stamina with very wide interest to accommodate and appreciate members of their team work. These are the salient ingredients of group work competencies. In modern times, organizations programme their activities and functions to match employees training, expertise and profession.

The scheduling or programming of organizational functions and duties suggests that employees should possess team work competencies in order to be able to function effectively in a group. To this direction, Stones, Freeman and Culbert (2000) stressed that organizations performance and productivity today depend much on the possession of requisite group work competencies by the employees. Those who are not capable to function in a team to discharge group responsibilities need not be appended into services of the organizations. The ability to cooperate with others, work under stress and to ginger group synergy is a fundamental factor that needs to be emphasized in team work performance in modern organizations.

### **Conclusion**

Organizational works are performed through employees. Employees perform their tasks to achieve organizational goals as well as to achieve their means of livelihood. The performance of employees' functions in organizations is primary. The level of their performance determines the level of operations and achievements in an organization. Essentially, employees do not function in isolation. Their functions are inter-dependence and inter-related. As they discharge their respective responsibilities in the organization, there is the need to recognize that the level of efficiency and effectiveness depends on their cooperation and cohesion. Usually, they discharge their functions in groups and teams. When employees function in groups or teams to discharge their functions, they are often faced with the challenge of cooperation and inter-dependence. Nowadays, organizations are interested in employees who are capable of working in teams for organizational goal achievement. This concerted interest is borne out of the reality that group/ team work cohesion is indispensable to organizational goal achievement. Where employees lack the needed team competencies, the needed synergy will be lacking to the detriment of the organization.

## Recommendations

Sequel to the findings and conclusion of the study, it is recommended that:

- (i) Business education instruction needs to be properly channeled to involve good strategies in developing team work competencies in students while in school.
- (ii) Cooperative teaching and instruction should be introduced in business education. This arrangement will make it possible for experienced business education graduates to be involved in programmed instructional delivery.
- (iii) The ideas of students' industrial work experience scheme (SIWES) need to be strengthened to ensure that students participate effectively. This will equally enable business education students to gain first hand knowledge of team work experience while still in the school.
- (iv) Instruction in the school should equally involve cooperative tasks and responsibilities. This must be effectively administered and supervised by the teachers.

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**Table 1: Mean Ratings of Respondents on Team Work Competencies**

S/N	ITEMS	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	DECISION
1.	Inability to be task result oriented	133	1.58	0.62	Rejected
2.	Possession of high achievement drive	133	3.45	0.56	Accepted
3.	Possession of high technical business ability	133	3.33	0.70	Accepted
4.	Possession of conceptual skill	133	3.41	0.64	Accepted
5.	Inability to work in a group	133	1.55	0.61	Rejected
6.	Ability to intelligently advice other	133	3.35	0.69	Accepted
7.	Inability to spur work-force to perform	133	1.50	0.52	Rejected
8.	Ability to create conducive working environment	133	3.35	0.72	Accepted
9.	Ability to maintain conducive working environment	133	3.44	0.58	Accepted
10.	Ability to cope under stress	133	3.35	0.66	Accepted
11.	Possession of poor social skills	133	1.49	0.50	Rejected
12.	Ability to be committed in group task	133	3.46	0.57	Accepted
13.	Ability to show social loafing	133	3.43	0.57	Accepted
14.	Possession of personal confidence	133	3.33	0.73	Accepted