

Comparative Relationship between Professionalism and Staff Development on Management of Business Education Programs among Public Universities in South-South, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study examines the relationship between professionalism and staff development on the effective management of business education programmes in South-South universities. To accomplish this, three research questions were answered, and three corresponding hypotheses guided the study were tested at a 0.05 level of significance. A descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study, and the targeted population was 98 Business educators in five selected universities in the South-south geopolitical zone. All 98 Business educators constitute the sample size since the population is of manageable size. An Instrument titled “Comparative Relationship between Professionalism and Staff Development on Effective Management of Business Education Programmes Questionnaire” (CRPSTDEMBEQ), validated by a business education specialist was employed for data gathering by experts. The correlation coefficient of the instrument was 0.736. The result among others showed a moderate overall level of professionalism but with variations across the assessed areas, which call for ethics training, workload management strategies, and professional development programmes, to enhance the professionalism of business educators in the region. Moreover, the result revealed a moderately positive and statistically significant relationship between staff professionalism and the effective management of the Business Education programme. The study concludes that professionalism and staff development are essential for effectively managing business education programmes in universities located in South-South Nigeria. It identifies a moderate level of professionalism with opportunities for improvement, highlighting the need for targeted interventions. The study recommended that Universities prioritize ongoing professional development by providing funding and facilitating access to workshops, conferences, certifications, and online courses.

Keyword: Professionalism, Staff Development, Effective Management, Business Education Programmes, South-South Universities

Introduction

Business education in universities plays a crucial role in preparing students for the complexities of the modern business environment. It is essential to manage business education programmes effectively to ensure that graduates have the skills and knowledge needed to make meaningful contributions to the economy. Two key factors that significantly influence the quality and effectiveness of these programmes are the professionalism of academic Staff and ongoing staff development initiatives (Education Policy Institute, 2019).

Professionalism involves adherence to ethical standards, expertise in the field, and a commitment to fostering student success. Additionally, Professionalism refers to the competence or skill expected of a professional, particularly business educators, whose professional body is the Association of Business Educators of Nigeria (ABEN). According to Mike Saks (2010), Professionalism involves specialized knowledge and skills that are typically acquired through extensive education and training. Meanwhile, Professionalism in Business Education as related to academia is characterized by competencies such as pedagogical expertise, ethical conduct, and a proactive approach to problem-solving. In business education, professionalism ensures that instructors teach not only theoretical concepts but also integrate practical applications that align with evolving industry standards. As Njoku (2006) emphasized, business education is dynamic and requires educators to continually update their skills and methodologies to remain relevant. Staff who demonstrate high levels of professionalism contribute to effective programme management by fostering innovation, maintaining ethical integrity, and ensuring academic rigor

However, staff development includes structured training and opportunities that enhance skills, promoting innovation and adaptability to contemporary challenges in education and industry. The rising demand for quality education and the ever-changing nature of business environments require a workforce capable of bridging academic knowledge with practical business needs. The relationship between staff professionalism and development directly impacts the management of academic programmes, affecting outcomes such as curriculum relevance, student engagement, and overall programme efficiency. Also, Staff development refers to initiatives aimed at improving the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of academic staff. This can include workshops, conferences, mentorship programs, and advanced training. Research has shown that structured staff development is linked to increased productivity and professionalism, equipping educators with the tools needed to achieve institutional goals effectively (Ddamulira, 2009). Moreover, Staff development refers to the continuous process of improving the skills, competencies, and knowledge of employees to enhance their performance and adapt to changing organizational needs. Effective staff development focuses on structured training programs, mentoring, workshops, and other learning opportunities tailored to align with individual and organizational goals.

In Nigerian universities, the lack of consistent training opportunities and resources has often led to underperformance and challenges in programme implementation. Meanwhile, the Interrelationship between professionalism and staff development is essential for the effective management of business education programmes. Staff development enhances professionalism by providing academic staff with opportunities to refine their skills, stay updated on global trends, and adopt new teaching methodologies. Professionalism, in turn, motivates educators to actively pursue personal and professional growth opportunities, fostering a culture of excellence within academic departments. A study focusing on tertiary institutions in Southwest Nigeria indicated that inadequate staff development initiatives result in low morale, decreased commitment, and limited contributions to institutional growth. Conversely, institutions that prioritize staff training and promote professional development report higher levels of programme efficiency and staff satisfaction (Ijefam, 2020). Implications for Business Education in Nigerian Universities For business education programmes to thrive, Nigerian universities must invest in both professionalism and staff development. This investment entails designing policies that support regular training, providing resources for skill acquisition, and promoting an environment where professionalism is recognized and rewarded. Integrating these elements ensures that programs remain relevant, innovative, and aligned with national and global economic demands. By addressing these factors, business education programs in Nigerian universities can better prepare students for the complexities of modern business environments while fostering a robust academic culture that drives institutional growth.

In the contemporary landscape of higher education, the effective management of business education programmes is pivotal for producing graduates equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to thrive in a competitive global market. Nigerian universities face numerous challenges in this domain, including maintaining high standards of professionalism among staff and ensuring robust staff development programmes. The correlation between these factors and the overall effectiveness of business education programme management remains underexplored. Despite efforts to enhance educational outcomes, there are persistent issues such as inadequate training for educators, lack of continuous professional development opportunities, and insufficient support for staff to stay abreast of current industry practices and pedagogical advancements. Meanwhile, Bassey, Umoren, and Akuegwu (2019) reported that continuous professional development (CPD) for educators is directly linked to improved teaching practices and student performance. However, in Nigerian universities, a lack of structured CPD opportunities has been a persistent issue. These shortcomings potentially undermine the quality of education provided to students and the operational efficiency of business education programmes particularly in the South-South Universities. Moreover, the evolving demands of the business world necessitate that educators not only possess academic proficiency but also exhibit high levels of professionalism, including ethical conduct, effective communication, and leadership skills. The impact of such professionalism on the management and success of business education programmes is crucial yet under-researched in the Nigerian context. Based on this premise, this study seeks to investigate the relationship between professionalism and staff development, and how these elements correlate with the effective management of business education programmes in South-South Universities. Understanding these correlations will provide insights into how Universities can better structure their staff development initiatives and promote a culture of professionalism to enhance the overall management and success of their business education programme. Therefore, the rationale for this study is based on the urgent need to tackle

the challenges in the effective management of business education programs in Nigerian universities, particularly in the South-South region.

Objective of the Study

1. To evaluate the adherence to ethical standards and professional conduct among staff in business education programmes in South-South Universities.
2. Analyze the correlation between staff professionalism and Staff development for effective management of business education programmes in South-South Universities.
3. To examine the extent to which Staff Professionalism and Staff Development correlate to effective management of business education programmes in South-South Universities.

Research Questions

1. What is the level of professionalism among the staff of business education programme in South-South Universities?
2. What is the relationship between staff professionalism and Staff Development for effective management of business education programmes in South-South Universities?
3. To what extent do Staff Professionalism and Staff Development correlate to effective management of business education programmes in South-South Universities?

Hypotheses

1. There is no significant relationship between Staff professionalism and the effective management of the business education programme in South-south Universities.
2. There is no significant relationship between staff development and the effective management of business education programmes in South-South universities.
3. There is no significant difference relationship between the influence of professionalism and staff development as correlates of effective management of business education programmes in South-South Universities

Methodology

This study investigates the relationship between professionalism, and staff development on the effective management of business education programmes in South-South universities in Nigeria. A descriptive survey research design was utilized for this study, focusing on all business educators across five selected universities in the South-South geopolitical zone. The sample comprised a total of 98 business educators from the following universities: Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma, Edo State (9 educators); Cross River University of Technology, Calabar, Cross River State (26 educators); Delta State University, Abraka (15 educators); Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Rumuolumini, Rivers State (12 educators); University of Benin, Benin-City, Edo State (12 educators); and University of Calabar, Calabar, Cross River State (23 educators). To collect data, an instrument titled “Comparative Relationship between Professionalism and Staff Development on Effective Management of Business Education Programmes Questionnaire” (CRPSTDEMBEQ), was employed. This questionnaire, validated by a business education specialist, included 35 statements related to professionalism, staff development, and the effective management of business education, structured on a 4-point rating scale. The internal consistency of the instrument was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, which yielded a correlation coefficient of 0.736. The researcher personally administered copies of the questionnaire to the respondents with the help of five research assistants. The collected data were analyzed using mean, standard deviation, correlation, and regression analysis to test the null hypotheses at a significance level of 0.05. If the p-value was less than 0.05, the null hypothesis was rejected; if it was equal to or greater than 0.05, the null hypothesis was accepted.

Presentation of Results

Research Question 1: What is the level of professionalism among the staff of business education programme in South-South Universities?

Table 1: Mean and standard Deviation on the level of Professionalism exhibited among Business Educators.

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S/N	Item Statement	N	Mean	SD	Remarks
1.	Staff demonstrate a high level of preparation and organization for their teaching activities.	98	3.33	.77	Agreed
2.	Staff maintain professional relationships with students and colleagues.	98	2.96	.84	Agreed
3.	Staff regularly engage in professional development activities to enhance their skills and knowledge.	98	3.11	.66	Agreed
4.	Staff adhere to ethical standards in their academic and administrative duties.	98	2.74	.98	Agreed
5.	Staff provide constructive feedback and mentoring to students promptly.	98	3.14	.59	Agreed
6.	Staff effectively balance their academic, administrative, and research responsibilities.	98	2.50	.94	Agreed
7.	Staff demonstrate a positive attitude towards their responsibilities and workplace challenges.	98	2.95	.59	Agreed
	Aggregate	98	3.00	0.76	Agreed

Note. SD = standard deviation

Data presented in Table 1 shows respondents' mean and standard deviation on the level of Professionalism exhibited among Business Educators in South-south universities. The mean responses of all 7 items ranged from 2.50 to 3.33. In contrast, the values of the standard deviation ranged from .59 to .98. The aggregate standard deviation of .76, along with the standard deviation of all the measures (questions) being less than one (1), clearly shows that the responses on the level of professionalism fall above the criterion aggregate mean score of 2.50 set for a high level of professionalism. Therefore, the aggregate mean score of 3.00 signifies a moderate overall level of professionalism, but with variations across the assessed areas. Thus, it suggests a need for targeted interventions, such as ethics training, workload management strategies, and professional development programmes, to enhance the professionalism of business educators in the region.

Research Question 2: What is the relationship between staff professionalism and Staff Development for effective management of business education programmes in South-South Universities?

Table 2: Mean, Standard Deviation on the relationship between professionalism and Staff Development for effective management of Business Education Programme.

S/N	Item Statement	N	Mean	SD	Remarks
Staff Professionalism					
8.	Staff professionalism significantly influences the success of business education programs.	98	3.45	.75	Agreed
9.	Adherence to professional ethics by staff enhances programme management.	98	3.16	.68	Agreed
10.	Regular professional development improves staff teaching effectiveness.	98	3.46	.59	Agreed
11.	Staff with a high level of professionalism contribute more effectively to curriculum development.	98	3.53	.63	Agreed
12.	Professional conduct among staff fosters a positive learning environment for students	98	3.40	.89	Agreed
13.	Staff professionalism improves significantly when they participate in development programs.	98	3.40	.62	Agreed
14.	Professional staff are more likely to take advantage of development programs.	98	3.73	.49	Agreed
	Aggregate	98	3.45	0.66	Agreed
Staff Development					

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S/N	Item Statement	N	Mean	SD	Remarks
15.	Staff development programmes are essential for improving staff skills in business education programme.	98	3.77	.51	Agreed
16.	Workshops and seminars for staff improve their ability to manage business education programs effectively.	98	3.64	.61	Agreed
17.	Financial support for professional training motivates staff to engage in continuous learning.	98	3.39	.68	Agreed
18.	Staff development initiatives enhance collaboration and teamwork among colleagues.	98	3.41	.51	Agreed
19.	Continuous professional development programs lead to innovation in teaching methodologies.	98	3.38	.53	Agreed
20.	There is a strong link between staff training and their ability to implement effective management strategies.	98	3.42	.55	Agreed
21.	Effective staff development contributes to a culture of professionalism in business education programs.	98	3.29	.626	Agreed
	Aggregate	98	3.47	0.57	Agreed
	Effective Management				
22.	Trained professional staff effectively manage business education programs through regular training	98	3.52	.69	Agreed
23.	Staff professionalism ensures better decision-making in programme management.	98	3.33	.67	Agreed
24.	Development programmes empower staff to address challenges in programme implementation effectively	98	3.24	.72	Agreed
25.	Professional and well-trained staff attract more students to business education programmes	98	3.16	.55	Agreed
26.	The combination of professionalism and development enhances the overall quality of business education programmes	98	3.27	.62	Agreed
27.	The synergy between professionalism and development enhances the overall effectiveness of programme management.	98	3.22	.62	Agreed
28.	Professionalism and staff development are mutually reinforcing for the successful management of business education programs	98	3.31	.58	Agreed
	Aggregate	98	3.29	0.64	Agreed

Note. SD = standard deviation

The data presented in Table 2 displays the aggregate mean and standard deviation regarding the relationship between staff professionalism and staff development, specifically for the effective management of business education programmes in South-South Universities. The aggregate mean scores and standard deviations across the three dimensions are as follows: Staff Professionalism (M=3.45, SD=0.66), Staff Development (M=3.47, SD=0.57), and Effective Management (M=3.29, SD=0.64). This indicates that both professionalism and staff development are critical factors influencing the success of these programmes. It can be concluded that staff professionalism and development are closely linked and essential for the effective management

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of business education programmes. The high aggregate mean scores across these dimensions highlight the importance of these factors in fostering innovation, enhancing teaching quality, and achieving program goals.

Research Question 3: To what extent do Staff Professionalism and Staff Development correlate to effective management of business education programmes in South-South Universities?

Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviation on how Staff Professionalism and Staff Development correlate to effective management of business education programmes.

S/N	Item Statement	N	Mean	SD	Remarks
29.	Staff adherence to professional ethics has a positive impact on the management of business education programmes	98	3.53	.69	Agreed
30.	Participation in staff development initiatives enhances business educators' ability to manage this programme effectively.	98	3.34	.66	Agreed
31.	Professional conduct among Business educators fosters a supportive environment for programme administration.	98	3.26	.71	Agreed
32.	Continuous professional training increases Business educators commitment to achieving programme objectives.	98	3.14	.56	Agreed
33.	Universities that prioritize staff development tend to have more efficiently managed business education programmes.	98	3.24	.63	Agreed
34.	A strong culture of professionalism among staff is associated with improved programme quality and better student outcomes.	98	3.19	.65	Agreed
35.	Collaboration among professionally trained Business educators leads to more effective decision-making in Business education programme management.	98	3.28	.62	Agreed
Aggregate		98	3.28	0.65	Agreed

Note. SD = standard deviation

The data in Table 3 indicate the average responses on how Staff Professionalism and Staff Development correlate to effective management of business education programmes in South-South Universities. The table shows that the average responses range from 3.14 to 3.53, while the standard deviation values range from 0.56 to 0.71. It is worth noting that the standard deviation of all the measures (questions) is less than one (1), which indicates that the level of acceptance falls above the criterion aggregate mean score of 2.50 set for a possible influence. The aggregate score of 3.28 (SD = 0.65) suggests that professionalism and staff development are interdependent and collectively enhance the management of business education programmes. This, underscore the importance of institutions investing in staff development and fostering a professional culture to ensure the sustainable success of their programme.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between Staff professionalism and the effective management of the business education programme in South-south Universities.

Table 4: Correlation between Staff Professionalism and the Effective Management of Business Education

Variable	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	R	P
Staff Professionalism	98	24.1327	2.80146	.553**	.000

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Effective Management	98	23.0510	2.98233
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**** Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).**

		Staff Development	Effective Management
Staff Professionalism	Pearson Correlation	1	.553**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	98	98
Effective Management	Pearson Correlation	.553**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	98	98

******. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 4 presents the results of the Pearson product-moment correlation between staff professionalism and the effective management of business education programs in South-South universities. The result was found to be a moderately positive and statistically significant correlation. Specifically, the correlation analysis revealed a moderately positive and statistically significant relationship between staff professionalism and the effective management of the Business Education programme in South-south Universities ($r = .553^{**}$, $p < 0.05$).

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant relationship between staff development and the effective management of business education programmes in South-South universities.

Table 5: Correlation between the Staff Development and the Effective Management of Business Education

Variable	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	R	P
Staff Development	98	24.2857	2.22914	.550**	.000
Effective Management	98	23.0510	2.98233		

**** Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).**

		Staff Development	Effective Management
Staff Development	Pearson Correlation	1	.550**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	98	98
Effective Management	Pearson Correlation	.550**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	98	98

******. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 5 presents the results of the Pearson product-moment correlation between staff development and the effective management of business education programme in South-south Universities. The result was found to be a moderately positive and statistically significant correlation. Specifically, the correlation analysis revealed a moderately positive and statistically significant relationship between staff Development and the effective management of the Business Education programme in South-south Universities ($r = .550^{**}, p < 0.05$).

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant difference relationship between the influence of professionalism and staff development as correlates of effective management of business education programmes in South-South Universities

Table 6: Table 6: Shows the summary of the findings about hypothesis 3.

Hypothesis	Regression Weights	Beta Coefficient	t-value	p-value	Hypothesis Supported
Ho	P-- EM	.400	4.172	.000	Yes
Ho	SD-- EM	.493	4.100	.000	Yes
R	.410				
F (2, 95)	33.06				

Note: * $p > 0.05$. P: Staff Development, EM= Effective Management.

The results in Table 6 show that there is no significant difference between the influence of Professionalism and Staff Development as a correlate of business education programmes in South-south Universities. The dependent variable EM was regressed on predicting variable of professionalism, and staff development. The independent variables Statistically significantly predicted effective management, $F(2, 95) = 33.06, p < .05$ which indicates that the two factors under study have a significant influence on effective management. Moreover, the $R^2 = .410$ depicts that the model explains 41% of the variance in effective management.

Discussion of Findings

This study investigates the relationship between professionalism, staff development, and the effective management of business education programs in South-South universities in Nigeria. The first research question reveals a moderate overall level of professionalism, though it varies across different assessed areas. All seven items on the questionnaire recorded mean scores above the benchmark average, indicating a need for targeted interventions. These interventions may include ethics training, workload management strategies, and professional development programmes to enhance the professionalism of business educators in the region. This study aligns with the findings of Shrestha and Koirala (2020), who also reported a moderate overall level of professionalism among teachers, with notable differences in areas such as classroom management, ethical behavior, and collaboration with peers. Similarly, the study supports the work of Hodges, Ginsburg, and Cruess (2019), who identified variations in professionalism across dimensions such as patient communication, interprofessional collaboration, and adherence to ethical practices in healthcare settings.

The results of the second research question indicate that staff professionalism and staff development are closely linked and essential for the effective management of business education programmes in South-South universities. The high aggregate mean scores across the three dimensions emphasize the importance of these factors in fostering innovation, enhancing teaching quality, and achieving programme goals. The corresponding hypothesis 1 and 2 further revealed a moderately positive and statistically significant relationship between staff Professionalism and Staff Development for effective management of the Business Education programme in South-South Universities. This finding aligns with the work of Nwachukwu and Chikezie (2019), which identifies staff development initiatives, such as workshops and certifications, as crucial for maintaining professionalism and ensuring effective program management. Additionally, the study's findings support the research of

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Ogbondah (2015), which connects ongoing professional development to higher academic standards in Nigerian universities. This highlights the positive impact of well-trained and professional staff on the effectiveness of program management.

The results of the third research question affirm that professionalism and staff development are interdependent and collectively enhance the management of business education programmes. The correspondence hypothesis three affirms that Professionalism and Staff Development have a significant influence on effective management. Moreover, the $R^2 = .410$ depicts that the model explains 41% of the variance in effective management. This finding aligns with the work of Garavan, and McGuire (2015) who reported that both professional conduct and staff training are significant contributors to effective leadership and management outcomes.

Conclusion

The study concludes that professionalism and staff development are essential for effectively managing business education programmes in universities located in South-South Nigeria. It identifies a moderate level of professionalism with opportunities for improvement, highlighting the need for targeted interventions such as ethics training and professional development. The findings indicate a positive and significant relationship between professionalism and staff development, which together account for 41% of effective management. Consistent with previous research, the study underscores that investing in staff training and ethical practices is vital for fostering innovation, enhancing teaching quality, and achieving program objectives.

Recommendations

Based on the preceding information and the results of this study, the following recommendations deemed necessary were proffered:

1. Universities should prioritize ongoing professional development by providing funding and facilitating access to workshops, conferences, certifications, and online courses.
2. Universities should regularly conduct ethics training workshops for business educators to address identified gaps in ethical conduct.
3. To motivate staff to actively engage in development initiatives and demonstrate high professionalism in their roles, financial incentives, promotions, and recognition awards should be introduced.
4. University management should create policies that prioritize professionalism and staff development as core institutional values, with measurable objectives linked to the efficient management of business education programmes.
5. Encourage universities to institutionalize mentorship programmes for staff to uphold professionalism.

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