An Employee Performance Evaluation: Employers Perspective. A Case Study of Technical Education Graduates.

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ABSTRACT
This paper is an evaluation of the employers feedback on the performance of technical education graduates of F.C.C.(T) Bichi, Kano State from batch 2013 – 2017 in the workplace with respect to knowledge and understanding, skills and personal qualities. The researcher used descriptive method of research utilizing the employers and managers of employed graduates as key informants of the study. Two hundred and fifty-three (253) questionnaires were distributed to the employers or managers but only one hundred and twenty (120) employers or managers participated in the study. The findings revealed that employers were very much satisfied on the performance of graduates in terms of knowledge and understanding of the job, general skills, specialized skills and personal qualities demonstrated in the workplace. Relationship exists between the degree of importance of the four aspects of job performance and the level of satisfaction on the performance of technical education graduates. Employers placed a strong preference to the technical education graduates of the campus. There is no mismatch of knowledge and skills of graduates and what the employers are expecting among the technical education graduates.
Keywords: Employers Feedback, Graduates, Employee Performance Evaluation, Performance Evaluation, Performance, Workplace, Evaluation.

I.   INTRODUCTION

Evaluation is a systematic determination and assessment of a subject's merit, worth and significance, using criteria governed by a set of standards (Staff, 1995-2012). Evaluation is aimed at improving the current programs, as well as informing the role-players, and or stakeholders towards the development of a full qualification. It is also a strong point as it enables constant evaluation towards addressing the shortfalls in any program. It creates opportunities for technical education graduates/ employers of these graduates to give feedback on the program in retrospect which is considered strength, and it allows the participants to reflect on how the program has impacted on their performance at their various workplaces.

Employers' feedback about the job performance of the graduates is an essential input to the curriculum developers and educators in the academic community in evaluating their goals and executing more strategies on how the graduates could be able to perform their functions as members of dynamic organizations in national and international settings. Performance is the expected organizational value of what people do. Performance refers only to behaviors that can make a difference to organizational goal accomplishment. Therefore performance is a property of behavior and the property of behavior to which performance refers is its expected value to the organization. Job performance is then, the total expected value to the organization of the discrete behavioural episodes that an individual carries out over a standard period of time.

An employee Performance evaluation is a regular assessment and review of an employee's

performance on the job (FreshBooks, 2019). Performance evaluations allow an employer to set clear expectations and measure the employee's success. The information gathered as part of a performance evaluation can help drive decisions about pay rises, promotions and layoffs. This is in agreement with Human Resource Management (2023), who opined that University policy requires that Unclassified Professional Staff (UPS) and University Support Staff (USS) employees receive a formal, written performance evaluation by the supervisor at least once a year within the Performance Management System.

Often, performance reviews include the manger's evaluation of the employee about their own review of their success. Performance evaluations should be judged against specific goals using clearly defined metrics. (FreshBooks, 2019).

Performance evaluation is also defined as a formal and productive procedure to measure an employee's work and results based on their job responsibilities. It is used to gauge the amount of value added by an employee in terms of increased business revenue compared to industry standards and overall employee return on investment (ROI).

Therefore, the goal of higher education system is to develop professionally competent, service oriented, principled and productive citizens. Higher Educational Institutions are mandated to prepare students for the world of work. The effectiveness of an educational program offered by an educational institution can be measured through the competencies of its graduates, the knowledge and skills the graduates acquired and can be applied in the work environment. The knowledge and skills that the graduates possessed can be determined through the feedback from employers of the graduate's performance in the work situation. The outcomes of any educational programs can be best measured in terms of how well the graduates applied their acquired knowledge and skills in the real work situation.

Graduates have demonstrated acquired attributes such as knowledge, thinking skills, communication skills, information skills, learning how to learn, cultural understanding and professional skills. These skills are what the industries are expecting from the graduates (Ng, Abdullah, Nee and Tiew, 2009).

In the study of Ramirez, Cruz, & Alcantara, (2014) the researchers noted that the graduates claimed their knowledge, academic acquired skills and competencies contributed greatly in their job performance. That is to say that significant relationship exists between

graduates' field of specialization and occupation after graduation. The academic acquired skills are relevant in their chosen occupations.

Gradually these theoretical underpinnings combine with critical analysis of contemporary issues and problems and the application part comes with the exposures to organizations or schools doing case study analysis. The academic trainings compel them to develop critical and analytical thinking. The focus on creating a nationalist perspective trains them to become agents of change in their own organizations (Valdez, 2009).

In technical education, analytical thinking requires technical skills and knowledge on project management and designs and development of products and services leading to innovation and introduction of new technologies. Technical education graduates are expected to possess certain level of communication and presentation skills with high analytical and critical thinking skills. These skills are demand driven meant to satisfy the employers need at real work environment.

Employer satisfaction can only be ascertained by conducting a survey aimed at collecting data from employers to learn what skill sets they see as important in making new hires and their satisfaction level with the graduates they have hired. Employer satisfaction with graduates general knowledge, specialized skills, and the employer's likelihood of hiring graduates in the future remains essentially unchanged. Employers seek employees who take the initiative and have the motivation to get the job done in a reasonable period of time. This is where quality measure comes in to have check and balance on the outputs and outcomes of the performance (Dotong, & Laguador, 2015).

This study explores on the feedback of the employers of technical education graduates in terms of their performance relative to the value of knowledge and understanding, skills and personal qualities. Identifying the observations of the employers as important customer of the Higher Education Institution is one way of evaluating how the graduates applied the acquired technical knowledge and values to their respective work places. It gives substantial input on the areas need to be addressed in the teaching and learning process and the required outcomes of the educational services. Hence, the need to determine if there is gap between the graduates acquired knowledge and skills and the application of such knowledge and skills in the work environment. The results of the study will be basis in the curricular reforms specifically Technical Education programs

and will serve as basis for policy formulation and implementation.

Objectives of the Study
The study primarily aimed to determine the level of satisfaction of the employers on the performance of technical education graduates of F.C.E. (T), Bichi that will serve as an input in the enhancement of technical education program specifically in Colleges of Education (Technical).
More specifically, the study aimed to determine:
a. The degree of importance of acquired knowledge and understanding of the job, skills and qualities acquired by the graduates towards their employment;
b. Assess the level of satisfaction of the employers on the knowledge and understanding, skills and qualities of technical education graduates as employee;
c. Analyze the significant difference on the level of satisfaction of the employers on the performance of technical education graduates in terms of course and year graduated, position and length of service;
d. Examine the relationship between and among the degree of importance of the acquired knowledge and skills and level of performance of graduates with respect to their knowledge and understanding of the job, general skills, specialized skills and personal qualities demonstrated by graduates in their work.

Method
The researcher utilized the descriptive survey–type of research design in order to analyze the level of satisfaction of the employers on the performance of technical education graduates from year 2013 to 2017. Key informants of the study were the employers or immediate supervisors of technical graduates employed in different companies or agencies. Through the use of contact numbers, emails and social media, the researcher gathered from the employed graduates regarding their current employers or managers, their address and contact numbers. A questionnaire checklist patterned from Noel-Levitz employers' satisfaction survey was used as a data gathering tool. Two hundred and fifty-three (253) questionnaires were distributed to the employers or managers but only one hundred and twenty (120) employers or managers participated in the study. The statistical tools used in the study were weighted mean and Pearson r. A likert scale was used to assess the degree of importance of performance indicator and level of performance of graduates in their job: 1.0 - 1.79: Not at All Important/Satisfied (NA); 1.8 - 2.59: Little Important/Satisfied   (L); 2.6 – 3.39: Somewhat Important/Satisfied (S); 3.4 – 4.19: Very Much Important/Satisfied   (VM); 4.20-5.0: Extremely Important /Satisfied (E).

II.   RESULT AND DISCUSSION
Majority of the technical education graduates employed are occupying skilled men positions, some are technicians, and very few occupy the rank and file positions in companies and industries within Kano State.
Note: Weighted Mean (**WM**);   Level of Importance (**LI**)

Table 1. Importance of Knowledge and Understanding of the Job

	Job Related Knowledge	WM	LI
1	Knowledge in employee's field of study	4.16	VM
2	Understanding of job-related information	4.20	E
3	Specific technical knowledge required for the job	3.97	VM
4	Knowledge of problem solving and team working	3.86	VM
5	Understanding of organizational context (industry regulations, competition, etc.)	3.84	VM
6	Understanding of business environment and customer awareness	3.40	VM

8	Understanding of systems and organizations (e.g., political systems, markets, cultures)	3.54	VM
9	Knowledge of peoples and cultures from other countries	3.15	S
	Average Weighted Mean	3.77	VM

For the employers, knowledge of job related information is extremely important for the employees to successfully perform their job with a mean of 4.20. Followed by knowledge in the field of study with the mean of 4.16 interpreted as very much important while knowledge about people and culture from other countries as somewhat important or not important in the performance of the job. Majority of the companies where technical education graduates were currently employed do not deem knowledge about people and culture from other country as necessary, probably because English is used as the mode of communication.

Table 2. Importance of General Skills

	General Skills	WM	LI
1	Strong communicator: Written communication/ Verbal communication	4.09	VM
	Ability to use own initiative but also follow instructions	4.19	VM
3	Listening to others	4.28	E
4	Organizing information for presentation	4.09	VM
5	Critical and creative thinking (e.g., evaluating information, making decisions)	4.09	VM
6	Problem solving and computation	4.12	VM
7	ICT knowledge and work readiness	4.16	VM
8	Global fluency and perspective	4.12	VM
9	Professionalism and tolerance to stress	3.79	VM
10	Use of equipment or technology specific to the job	3.78	VM
11	Leadership/networking	3.93	VM
12	Team work (interpersonal relationship)	4.39	E
13	Customer service	4.36	E
	Average Weighted Mean	4.11	VM

Table 2 presents the importance of general skills. For the employers interpersonal skills, customer service skills and listening to others are extremely necessary for the graduates in performing their job. Employers also considered critical thinking skills, organizing skills, problem solving and computation, ICT skills are also very much important for employees to successfully perform their jobs. These attributes must be developed among the students in the Colleges of Education (Technical) because soft skills were considered by these employers to the graduates when they apply for a job.

Generic attributes include communication skills, problem-solving skills, computer literacy, information literacy, ability and willingness to learn, and teamwork. The need to have skilled worker and not just knowledge is a factor that is highly demanded for any job requirement (Ng, Abdullah, Nee and Tiew, 2009). The result is in agreement with Dearing Report in the UK which recommended the development of communication, numeracy, information technology and learning how to learn at a higher level within all subjects (CIHE, 2012).

Table 3. Importance of Specialized Skills

	Specialized Skills	WM	LI
1	Management of organizational resources (budgets, subordinates, etc.)	3.61	VM
2	Management of a certain project	3.69	VM
3	Ability to negotiate contracts, sales, alliances with clients	3.74	VM
4	Mentoring or coaching colleagues	3.88	VM
5	Ability to set goals and allocate time to achieve them	4.01	VM
6	Ability to translate theory into practice	3.93	VM
	Average Weighted Mean	3.81	VM

Employers considered graduates ability to set goals and time management as very much important skill that an employee should possess. Manage organizational resources and able to translate theory into practice as very much important skill that they should possess. Mentoring or coaching, negotiate contracts and management of projects were expected among technical education graduates. Employers were more concerned on the ability of the employees to set goals and allocate time to achieve these goals as very much important skill that an employee should have. Ability to translate theory into practice, mentoring and coaching as very much important skill that graduates should possess. These skills must be developed among the students while they are in College because employers put much premium on these skills while the graduates were already in the world of work.

Table 4. Importance of Personal Qualities

	Personal Qualities	WM	LI
1	Flexibility (responds well to change)	4.45	E
2	Creativity (identifies new approaches to problems)	4.33	E
3	Empathy (understands the situations, feelings, or motives of others)	4.28	E
4	Reliability (can be depended on to complete work assignments)	4.43	E
5	Integrity (understands and applies ethical principles to decisions)	4.47	E
6	Self-discipline (exhibits control of personal behavior)	4.40	E
7	Positive attitude toward work	4.54	E
8	Willingness to learn	4.58	E
9	Understands and takes directions for work assignments	4.50	E
10	Accepts responsibility for consequences of actions	4.51	E
	Average Weighted Mean	**4.45**	**E**

It can be seen that employers considered all the stated personal qualities as extremely important for the employees to successfully perform their job. They put much premium on self-discipline, positive attitude towards work and willingness to learn as important qualities of an employee. These personal qualities should emanate to the graduates for them to be hired in their jobs. The findings of the study is parallel to Australian Industry Group report, which stated that the demand for higher levels of skills, frequent updating of skills and excellent "soft skills" as well as technical skills is extremely important (Australian Industry Group, 2009). The survey showed that over 90 per cent of the employers look for people who are flexible and adaptive, willing to learn on the job, team players, technically competent and committed to excellence (Ng, Abdullah, Nee, and Tiew, 2009). Australian Industry Group, suggests that employers recognize

employability skills, a positive attitude and work experience as the most important factors when recruiting graduates. Employers were looking for the employees not only competent in terms of technical skills but also of personal qualities such as flexibility and willingness to learn.

Table 5. Satisfaction of the Employers on the Knowledge and Understanding of the Job of the Technical Education graduates.

	Job Related Knowledge	WM	LI
1	Knowledge in employee's field of study	3.99	VM
2	Understanding of job-related information	4.02	VM
3	Specific technical knowledge required for the job	3.83	VM
4	Knowledge of problem solving and team working	3.85	VM
5	Understanding of organizational context (industry regulations, competition, etc.)	3.66	VM
6	Understanding of business environment and customer awareness	3.17	S
8	Understanding of systems and organizations (e.g., political systems, markets, cultures)	3.32	S
9	Knowledge of peoples and cultures from other countries	3.16	S
	Overall, how satisfied are you with Employee's knowledge and understanding of his/her major field of study	3.99	VM

Table 5 presents the satisfaction of the employers on the knowledge and understanding of the job of the technical education graduates. Employers were very much satisfied with the technical education graduates" understanding of job related information, knowledge about business and information technology (IT) skills which they consider as very much essential for the successful performance of job. However, they are somewhat satisfied with the knowledge of international business environment, people and culture from other countries. This can be explained by the fact that business of the employers are operating in the domestic or local market. Knowledge about business environment and customer awareness were not necessary at this time. In the overall, employers are very much satisfied on the knowledge and understanding of the job of the graduates regardless of their batch. Employers from all industries identified oral and written communication as one of the most important attributes needed in early career graduates. Being flexible and adaptable to different work environment was another recurring theme that was found in the open-ended comments. Knowledge and skills in using technology was outlined in all professions and industries. An area where respondents in business and health professions wrote extensively was related to setting priorities and monitoring outcomes. Respondents suggested that new graduates lacked skills in planning and monitoring outcomes (Joanna & Azlina, 2020; Shah, Grebennikov, and Nair, 2015).

Table 6. Satisfaction of the Employers on the General Skills Acquired by the Technical Education Graduates.

	General Skills	WM	LI
1	Strong communicator: Written communication/ Verbal communication	3.87	VM
2	Ability to use own initiative but also follow instructions	3.98	VM

3	Listening to others	4.14	VM
4	Organizing information for presentation	3.86	VM
5	Critical and creative thinking (e.g., evaluating information, making decisions)	3.83	VM
6	Problem solving and computation	3.94	VM
7	ICT knowledge and work readiness	4.12	VM
8	Global fluency and perspective	4.01	VM
9	Professionalism and tolerance to stress	3.67	VM
10	Use of equipment or technology specific to the job	3.79	VM
11	Leadership/networking	3.78	VM
12	Team work (interpersonal relationship)	4.22	E
13	Customer service	4.21	E
	Overall, how SATISFIED are you with this employee's general skills as they relate to the requirements of the job?	**4.06**	**VM**

Technical Education graduates of F.C.E.(T) Bichi exhibited very good general skills as shown in the level of satisfaction of the employers specifically the teamwork or interpersonal skills and customer service skills of the graduates which they considered as two most important skills that an employee should have, while they were very much satisfied with the problem solving and computation skill and use of ICT knowledge of the employed graduates. In the overall, the employers are very much satisfied with the general skills of graduates. The findings of the study is found similar to the studies in the European context, a large-scale survey on employers' perception of graduate employability in 27 European countries with 7,036 graduate employers found that graduate recruiters were most likely to highlight the importance of teamwork, sector-specific skills, written and oral communication skills, computer literacy, the ability to adapt to new situations and analytical and problem solving skills as important attributes when recruiting (European Commission, 2010). The findings is also in line with the findings Dabalen, Oni and Adekola (2002); National University Commission (2004) and Beeteng and Ofori-Sarpong (2002).

Table 7. Satisfaction of the Employers on the Specialized Skills Acquired by the Technical Education Graduates.

	Specialized Skills	WM	LI
1	Management of organizational resources (budgets, subordinates, etc.)	3.55	VM
2	Management of a certain project	3.59	VM
3	Ability to negotiate contracts, sales, alliances with clients	3.60	VM
4	Mentoring or coaching colleagues	3.70	VM
5	Ability to set goals and allocate time to achieve them	3.85	VM
6	Ability to translate theory into practice	3.72	VM
	Overall, how SATISFIED are you with these employees' specialized skills as they relate to the requirements of the job?	**3.85**	**VM**

Employers were very much satisfied with the graduates' ability to set goals and time management to achieve the set goals and their ability to translate theory into practice and mentoring or coaching colleagues for which they considered as important skills that the employee should have. However, performance of employees in terms of management of organizations resources, management of certain projects and ability to negotiate are least among the specialized skills performed by the employees. In the overall, employers are very much satisfied with the specialized skills of the graduates. This implies that F.C.E.(T), Bichi prepared and developed its graduates with the necessary skills needed in the job. Similar to the findings of Akinyemi, Ofem, and Ikuenomore (2011) and Abiodun, (2010) that graduates claimed that their knowledge, academic

acquired skills and competencies contributed greatly in their job performance. Significant relationship exists between graduates' field of specialization and occupation after graduation. The academic acquired skills are relevant in their chosen occupations Abiodun, (2010).

Table 8. Satisfaction of the Employers on the Personal Qualities Demonstrated in work by the Technical Education Graduates.

	Personal Qualities	WM	LI
1	Flexibility (responds well to change)	4.12	VM
2	Creativity (identifies new approaches to problems)	4.06	VM
3	Empathy (understands the situations, feelings, or motives of others)	4.08	VM
4	Reliability (can be depended on to complete work assignments)	4.15	VM
5	Integrity (understands and applies ethical principles to decisions)	4.15	VM
6	Self-discipline (exhibits control of personal behavior)	4.12	VM
7	Positive attitude toward work	4.32	E
8	Willingness to learn	4.39	E
9	Understands and takes directions for work assignments	4.26	E
10	Accepts responsibility for consequences of actions	4.33	E
	Overall, how SATISFIED are you with this employees' personal qualities as they relate to the requirements of the job?	**4.20**	**E**

The table 8 shows that employers were extremely satisfied with the personal qualities exhibited by the graduates in workplace. They were extremely satisfied with the graduates on their willingness to learn, positive attitude towards work responsibility and ability to take directions and assignments. Shah and Nair's research with 400 graduate employers from different industries in Australia found out the following graduates' capabilities rated by employers as high on importance and low on satisfaction: These were ability to communicate effectively; ability to organize work and manage time effectively; willingness to face and learn from errors and listen openly to feedback; ability to set and justify priorities; being flexible and adaptable; and willingness to listen to different points of views before coming to a decision (Shah, Grebennikov, Nair, 2015). The findings of Lowden, Hall, Elliot, & Lewin, (2011), reported that majority of employers are satisfied with their graduate recruit. Employers expect graduates to demonstrate a range of skills and attributes that include team working, communication, leadership, critical thinking, problem solving and often managerial abilities or potential (Lowden, Hall, Elliot, & Lewin, 2011).

Table 9. Relationship between Level of Importance of Indicators and Satisfaction on the Performance of Technical Education Graduates

Performance Indicators	R	Sig	Ho	
Knowledge & Understanding	0.799**	0.000	R	
General Skill	0.719**	0.000	R	
Specialized Skill	.673**	0.000	R	
Personal Qualities	.635**	0.000	R	

**Significant at p-value<0.01

It can be inferred in Table 9 that there is significant relationship between level of importance of the performance indicators and the level of satisfaction on the performance of technical education graduates on the following. The high degree of importance of knowledge and understanding of the job expected to graduate employees also resulted to high level of satisfaction on the performance since the Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.799 which means high correlation between the two. In terms of general skills, there is significant relationship between degree of

importance and degree of satisfaction since the Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.719 which means high correlation. There is noted high positive correlation between importance of specialized skills and satisfaction on this specific skill since the Pearson correlation coefficient of .673 means high correlation. In terms of personal qualities, there is significant relationship between the degree of importance and the degree of satisfaction since the Pearson correlation coefficient of .635 means high positive correlation. The high positive correlation means that the knowledge, skills and attitudes of graduates developed among the technical education graduates are also related to their good performance in their job. This further implies that there is no mismatch between the graduate's competencies and what the industry expects among graduates as workforce in the industry as reflected in the degree of importance of knowledge, skills and personal qualities and the level of satisfaction of the employers on the performance of graduates. Three areas received consistent high importance and high performance ratings in four separate studies in two different universities. These three items were commitment to ethical practice (4.60 mean on importance and 3.75 mean on performance wanting to produce as good a job as possible (4.50 mean on importance and 3.63 mean on performance); and (3) a willingness to listen to different points of view before coming to a decision (4.37 mean on importance and 3.54 mean on performance. In contrast to the findings of Aquino, Del Mundo, and Quizon, (2015) Employers' of teacher education graduates' assess their proficiencies or performance, to be lower than their expectations of their usefulness (Ogundowole, 2002). A mean gap of 0.25 stresses disparity between employers' perceptions of usefulness of proficiencies and their satisfaction of the graduates" proficiencies. The highest gap can be seen to be that on "foundations" (0.45), with the gap in assessment (0.34) following next. The gaps on educational technology, pedagogical and professional skills, dispositions and diversity of learners trail in third, with a value of 0.28. The smallest gap of 0.06 is recorded on research skills.

III.   CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Based on the findings of the study, the researchers concluded that employers are very much satisfied with the performance of technical education graduates of F.C.E. (T), Bichi. Employers are satisfied on the knowledge and generic skills acquired by the graduates in the College of Education (Technical) which they believed are very much important in their job. There is high positive correlation between the importance of the four aspects of job performance and the satisfaction on the performance of technical education graduates. There is no mismatch of knowledge and skills of graduates and what the industry is expecting among technical education graduates. In the light of the significant findings, the researcher recommended the College should enrich its curricular programs to further enhance graduates knowledge, skills and personal qualities. Curriculum review of the technical education programs to assess the relevance of the subjects offered and may consider subjects that will enhance students' knowledge about international business environment and understanding of systems and organizations (Bankole, 2002). Program outcomes, specifically the graduates competencies should be included in the future survey of employers' feedback of the employers on the performance of graduates. Include foreign employers to assess the graduates' competencies in the global business environment. Partnership with the business and industry may be instituted for the revision of curriculum and further training of the students.

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