



Professionalism and Staff Development in Managing Business Education Programme in South-South Nigerian Public Universities: A Comparative Relationship

HAKEEM OLANIYI LIADI, AGATHA SAMSON
National Open University of Nigeria, Abuja, Nigeria

Abstract. This study investigated the relationship between professionalism and staff development in the efficient management of business education programmes at Nigerian universities in the South-South area. To do this, three research questions were addressed and three hypotheses were tested at a significance level of 0.05. A descriptive survey approach was used, with a population of 98 business instructors from five selected universities in the South-South geopolitical zone. Given the population's manageable size, the sample includes all 98 business educators. Data was collected using an instrument titled "Professionalism and Staff Development on Effective Management of Business Education Program Questionnaire" (PSTDEMBEPQ), which was validated by a business education expert. The correlation coefficient of the instrument was determined to be 0.736. The findings revealed a moderate overall level of professionalism among educators, although there were variations across the different assessed areas. These variations highlight the need for ethical training, effective workload management strategies, and professional development programmes to enhance the professionalism of business educators in the region. Furthermore, the results indicated a moderately positive and statistically significant relationship between staff professionalism and the effective management of business education programmes. The study concludes that professionalism and staff development are critical for the effective management of business education programmes in South-South Nigerian universities. It identifies an overall moderate level of professionalism, suggesting opportunities for improvement and emphasizing the necessity for targeted interventions. The study recommends that universities prioritize ongoing professional

development by allocating funds and facilitating access to workshops, conferences, certifications, and online courses.

Keywords: Professionalism, Staff Development, Effective Management, Business Education programme, South-South Universities

1. Introduction

In the swiftly changing global economy, the demand for highly qualified business education professionals has refocused attention on the quality and management of business education programmes, particularly within higher education institutions. In Nigeria, public Universities play an important role in developing future corporate leaders and professionals. However, the effectiveness of these initiatives is heavily reliant on the professionalism of the academic staff and their level of continual development. Meanwhile, it is essential to manage the business education programme 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 this programme 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. 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 Haynes (2024) 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 requires a workforce capable of bridging academic knowledge with practical business needs. The relationship between staff professionalism and development directly impacts the management of academic programme, 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 programmes, 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 programmes, 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 programme. 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 a business education programme 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 programmes remain relevant, innovative, and aligned with national and global economic demands. By addressing these factors, business education programmes in Nigerian universities can better prepare students for the complexities of modern business environments while fostering a robust academic culture that drives institutional growth.

1.1 Statement of the Research Problem

The effective management of Business Education programmes in Nigerian institutions is essential for producing graduates who are competent, innovative, and employable in today's competitive economy (Okoro, 2020; Uwaifo & Ugiagbe, 2019). Public universities in South-South Nigeria must deliver high-quality business education through well-structured curricula, qualified faculty, and efficient administrative processes. However, there is growing concern that the management of these programmes is falling short of expectations (Ezeani & Oladele, 2021). One significant factor contributing to this issue is the decline in professionalism among academic and administrative personnel. Reports indicate a deterioration in work ethics, a lack of commitment to responsibilities, inadequate communication, and resistance to change. These behaviors undermine the quality of teaching, curriculum delivery, and student outcomes. Additionally, many staff members lack access to continuous professional development opportunities, which are crucial for updating knowledge, adapting to technological advancements, and implementing new educational methodologies (Igbinedion & Ojeaga, 2018). The inadequate investment in staff development, whether through workshops, seminars, postgraduate training, or research funding, has created a substantial gap in the professional competencies necessary for effectively managing Business Education programmes. This

predicament is further exacerbated by institutional challenges such as limited financial resources, administrative bottlenecks, and inconsistent policy implementation across regional public universities (Adebayo & Yusuf, 2022; Nwagwu, 2020). Despite the recognized importance of professionalism and staff development in achieving educational objectives, few empirical studies have explored their combined impact on the management of Business Education programmes in South-South Nigeria. 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 programme 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 programme in Nigerian universities, particularly in the South-South region.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

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

1.3 Research Questions

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

1.4 Hypotheses

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

2. Methodology

This study investigates the relationship between professionalism and staff development on the effective management of business education programme 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 "Professionalism and Staff Development on Effective Management of Business Education Programme Questionnaire" (PSTDEMBEPQ) 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. Cronbach's alpha was utilized to evaluate the internal consistency of the instrument, yielding a correlation coefficient of 0.736. The researcher personally distributed copies of the questionnaire to respondents, with the assistance of five research assistants. The collected data were analyzed using mean, standard deviation, correlation, and regression analysis to test the null hypotheses at a 0.05 level of significance. If the p-value was less than 0.05, the null hypothesis was rejected; if it equaled or exceeded 0.05, the null hypothesis was accepted.

3. Presentation of Results and Discussion

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

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

S/N	Item Statement	N	Mean	SD	Remarks
1.	Staff show a high level of preparation and organization in their instructional activities	98	3.33	.77	Agreed
2.	Staff maintain professional relationships with both students and coworkers.	98	2.96	.84	Agreed
3.	Staff constantly engage in professional development initiatives to upgrade their skills and expertise.	98	3.11	.66	Agreed
4.	Staff members follow ethical norms in their academic and administrative duties.	98	2.74	.98	Agreed
5.	Staff give students positive comments and mentorship on a timely basis.	98	3.14	.59	Agreed
6.	Staff members skillfully manage their academic, administrative, and research responsibilities.	98	2.50	.94	Agreed
7.	Staff members maintain a good attitude toward their obligations and working obstacles.	98	2.95	.59	Agreed
	Aggregate	98	3.00	0.76	Agreed

Note. SD = standard deviation

The data in Table 1 reflect the mean and standard deviation of respondents' levels of professionalism among business educators in South-South universities. The average response for all seven items ranged from 2.50 to 3.33. In contrast, the standard deviations varied from .59 to .98. The aggregate standard deviation of .76, along with the standard deviation of all measures (questions being less than one (1), clearly suggests that the responses on the degree of professionalism exceed the threshold aggregate mean score of 2.50 specified 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 a professional development programme 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 programme 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 substantially determines the success of business education programme.	98	3.45	.75	Agreed
9.	Staff adherence to professional ethics improves programme management.	98	3.16	.68	Agreed
10.	Regular professional development enhances staff teaching efficacy.	98	3.46	.59	Agreed
11.	Staff with a high level of professionalism make greater contributions to curriculum development.	98	3.53	.63	Agreed
12.	Professional behaviour among staff provides a healthy learning environment for students.	98	3.40	.89	Agreed
13.	Staff professionalism improves considerably when they participate in development programme.	98	3.40	.62	Agreed
14.	Professional staff are more inclined to take advantage of development opportunities.	98	3.73	.49	Agreed
	Aggregate	98	3.45	0.66	Agreed
	Staff Development				
15.	Staff development programme are critical for improving employee skills in business education programme.	98	3.77	.51	Agreed
16.	Workshops and seminars for staff help them manage business education programme more effectively.	98	3.64	.61	Agreed

S/N	Item Statement	N	Mean	SD	Remarks
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 programme led 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 leads to a culture of professionalism in business education programme.	98	3.29	.626	Agreed
	Aggregate	98	3.47	0.57	Agreed
Effective Management					
22.	Regular training for professional personnel leads to effective management of the business education programme and improves decision-making.	98	3.52	.69	Agreed
23.	Staff development programme enable Staff to efficiently address programme implementation issues.	98	3.33	.67	Agreed
24.	Professional and well-trained staff draw more students to business education programmes.	98	3.24	.72	Agreed
25.	The combination of professionalism and development improves the overall quality of business education curricula.	98	3.16	.55	Agreed
26.	The combination of professionalism and development improves the overall efficacy of programme management.	98	3.27	.62	Agreed
27.	Professionalism and staff development are mutually reinforced for effective management of the business education programme.	98	3.22	.62	Agreed
28.	Professionalism and staff development are mutually reinforced for effective management of business education programme.	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 programme 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 programme. It can be concluded that staff professionalism and development are closely linked and essential for the effective management of business education programme. The high aggregate mean scores across these dimensions highlight the importance of these factors in fostering innovation, enhancing teaching quality, and achieving programme goals.

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

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

S/N	Item Statement	N	Mean	SD	Remarks
29.	Staff adherence to professional ethics has a positive impact on the management of business education programme	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 strengthens Business instructors' commitment to accomplishing programme objectives.	98	3.14	.56	Agreed
33.	Universities that promote staff development tend to have more efficiently run business education programme.	98	3.24	.63	Agreed
34.	A strong culture of professionalism among staff is linked to higher programme quality and greater student results.	98	3.19	.65	Agreed

S/N	Item Statement	N	Mean	SD	Remarks
35.	Collaboration among professionally trained business educators results in 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 programme 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 programme. This underscores 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
Effective Management	98	23.0510	2.98233		

** 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 programmes 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 programme in South-South universities.

Table 5: Correlation between the Staff Development and 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 illustrates the Pearson product-moment correlation between staff development and the effective management of business education programmes in South-South universities. The findings indicated a moderately positive and statistically significant relationship. The correlation study revealed a reasonably favorable and statistically significant association between staff development and effective management of Business Education programs 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 programme 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.

Table 6 shows that there is no significant difference in the influence of Professionalism and Staff Development as predictors of business education programs in South-South Universities. The dependent variable, EM, was regressed on the predictor variables 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.

4. Discussion of Findings

This study investigates the relationship between professionalism, staff development, and the effective management of business education programme 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 a professional development programme 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 programme 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 programme management. Additionally, the study's findings support the research of 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 programme management.

The results of the third research question affirm that professionalism and staff development are interdependent and collectively enhance the management of business education programme. 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.

5. Conclusion

The study concludes that professionalism and staff development are essential for effectively managing business education programme 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 programme objectives.

6. Recommendations

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

- Universities should prioritize ongoing professional development by providing funding and facilitating access to workshops, conferences, certifications, and online courses.
- Universities should regularly conduct ethics training workshops for business educators to address identified gaps in ethical conduct.
- 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.
- 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 programme.
- Encourage universities to institutionalize mentorship programme for staff to uphold professionalism.

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