



SKILLS ACQUISITION AS CORRELATE TO DECENT WORK IN DIGITAL ERA AMONG BUSINESS EDUCATION STUDENTS IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN AKWA IBOM STATE

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Abstract

This study investigated skills acquisition as correlate to decent work in digital era among business education students in tertiary institutions in Akwa Ibom State. Three research questions and three null hypotheses guided the study. The study adopted a correlational design. The population of the study comprised 625 business education students from tertiary institutions that offer business education programme in Akwa Ibom State. Purposive sampling techniques was used to select final year students from the tertiary institutions comprising 46 business education students from University of Uyo, Akwa Ibom State and 130 students from Akwa Ibom State College of education Afaha-Nsit making the sample size for the study to be 176 business education students. The reliability of the instrument was determined using Cronbach alpha method which yielded an index of 0.79, and 0.78 for cluster 1 and 2 respectively. The data was analyzed using Pearson Moment Correlation Coefficient to answer the research questions while Linear Regression Analysis was used to test the null hypothesis at .05 level of significance. Findings showed that there is a high correlation between skills acquisition and decent work in digital era among business education students. It was further revealed that the coefficient of relationship between skills acquisition and decent work in digital era was significant. The researchers concluded that the government needs to provide adequate number of physical and material resources to business education programme in tertiary institutions in Awka Ibom State. Based on the findings, it was recommended that entrepreneurship courses should be given priorities in the time table schedule of business education programme to enable students acquire entrepreneurship skills for self and decent work on graduation. ICT skills should be included in the curriculum of business education to enable students acquire the skills needed so as to make them employable and decent work upon graduation.

***Keywords:** Skills Acquisition, Decent Work, Digitalization, Tertiary Institution, Business Education.*

Introduction

Business Education plays a significant role in the economic and national development by providing knowledge and skills to its recipients thereby enabling them to adequately handle sophisticated office technologies and information systems, be employed and also be employers of labour. Business education is also a part of vocational education that helps its recipients to be self-reliant and also give them the chance to obtain both theoretical and practical skills. Business



Education is an entrepreneurship based programme which equips students with relevant skills, knowledge and competences needed in the business world and for decent work. According to Kiyosaki (2013), Business Education is the type of education needed in the 21st century, which has a built-in mechanism for developing skills in almost all disciplines viz accounting, investment, marketing, law and information communication and technology (ICT) in the learner. Knowledge and skills and its application to problem solving are essential attribute of any good educational model especially business education. According to Udo (2015) business education is a comprehensive activity-based occupational education programme that is concerned with the acquisition of practical skills, abilities, understanding, attitudes, work habits and competencies that are requisite to success in any chosen business occupation. Edokpolor and Egberi (2017) had stipulated that the actual goals of business education shall be to: prepare students for specific career in office occupations, equip students with the requisite skills for job creation and entrepreneurship, and expose students with knowledge about business, including a good blend of computer technology, which incorporates Information and Communication Technology (ICT). Business Education offers students/recipients who wish to pursue a career the opportunity to develop skills, abilities and understanding that will enable them to enter, perform and progress in a particular business occupation and also have a decent work.

The digital era calls for continuous acquisition of new skills and updating of existing skills in order to align with global trend. New technologies are emerging with attendant need for constant change in work environment. The use of digital technology which gives people access to huge amount of information has necessitated the acquisition of a new set of skills to access, manage, integrate and evaluate information. Skill acquisition is a process through which one gains mastery of a particular vocation or the basics of a task with the sole purpose of rendering services for financial freedom. Skill acquisition is also the ability to be trained on a particular task or function till you become an expert on the skill. According to Udo and Babangide (2017) skill acquisition is the capacity to be trained on a particular business occupation and become a proficient professional in it. In the same vein, Omidiji and Ogwu (2019) defined skill acquisition as a systematic and sequential development of skills that promotes efficiency and effectiveness in the performance of a specified job. Omidiji and Ogwu noted that skill acquisition in business education include communication skill, reading skill, manipulative skill, shorthand skill, keyboarding skill, entrepreneurial skills, technical skills, computer skill book keeping skill etc. Skill acquisition is the main focus of business education programme for self-reliance, more employable motives and decent work. It is a form of training of individuals or group of individuals to acquire skills needed for self-sustenance (Idoko, 2014). Skill acquisition is the manifestation of idea and knowledge through training geared towards instilling in the youths the spirit of entrepreneurship needed for meaningful development (Douli, 2012). Skill does not depend solely upon a person's fundamental, innate capacities but must be developed through training, practice and experience an individual acquired. Two fundamental issues are used when a skill is to be acquired. According to Okoro and Ursula (2012), the first is the conditions which promote acquisition and the second is the change that will occur when the skill is acquired. Umeno (2021) noted that some of the digital skills required by business education graduates for employability include information and communication skills, critical and technical innovation skills, marketing skills, entrepreneurial skills, strategy and planning skills, problem solving skills etc.

Technical innovation skill is the ability to generate ideas that create value and improve processes, from inventing a machine to finding a faster route to work. Having technical innovation skills is an asset in the workplace because they enable you to solve problems, work smarter and advance knowledge in your field. Technical innovation skills are the knowledge and abilities you use to create and adapt to change. The future is now as these technical innovation skills are needed more than ever in the world of work today, workers at all levels need to develop their innovation



skills. These skills include competencies like creativity, critical thinking, communication, strategic thinking and problem solving to find and develop creative solution for the world of work and for decent work. Viewed as a process, it required tools, techniques, and routines. Technical Innovation cannot only be taught but also viewed as a skill that grows stronger with practice (Jam; 2015).

Entrepreneurship skills encompasses broad range of various skills sets like, technical skills, leadership, business management skills and creative thinking. Entrepreneurship skill is applied to many different job roles and industries. Entrepreneurship skills are indispensable for the economic survival of both students and graduates. According to Mgbonyebi and Olaniyi (2019), educating people on the need for making their own business decisions, acquiring some basic vocational skills and using them with the knowledge gained in school is the bedrock of economic empowerment and development which is urgently needed. Information and communication technology which is one of the entrepreneurship skills is a veritable and essential tool in entrepreneurship education all over the world. Okereke and Okoroafor (2012) asserted that entrepreneurship skills have been acknowledged worldwide as the pertinent and rewarding tools for job creation, self-employment and economic survival of any nation. Effective and efficient skills development systems which connect education to entrepreneurship skills acquisition can help a nation sustain productive growth and development and when improved upon, can lead to creation of good jobs which in turn enhances the people's standard of living. Zhou and Xu (2012) argued that with a glut of graduates facing growing competition in a tough job market, entrepreneurial skills are being presented as one possible solution. Akunnaya (2012) asserted that entrepreneurship skills are those skills that will enable the individual to maximize the resources around him within the limits of his capabilities. Entrepreneurship skills is a programme that inculcates creative innovative, technical, productive and managerial skills needed by in business education students and graduates for self-reliance, national development and decent work.

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) skill refers to one's ability to work and converse with people through various technologies. The current globalized world looks at ICT at a slightly different angle. The demand for ICT skills is increasing in the job market. The job market nowadays considers ICT skills as essential in recruitment processes for most of better jobs (Garrido, Sullivan & Gordon, 2012). ICT skills are considered an important asset which promotes competitiveness and improves business productivity. ICT skills includes business education students knowing how to use computer/ICT gadgets to perform productive tasks as word processing, spreadsheet calculation, graphic design, data base management, and desk top publishing, presentation in conferences, web browsing, and structural design with Computer Aided Design (CAD) and Computer Aided Manufacturing (CAM) in the world of work. ICT skill offers some of the fastest growing jobs in the modern labour market. The possession of ICT skills by Business education graduating students is of great importance for them to cope with modern day technology and remain relevant in global competitive business world and for decent work.

Decent work is an aspect of work or employment which respects the fundamental rights of a worker or human person as well as the rights of the workers in terms of working conditions in respect to work safety and remuneration. The International Labour Organization (ILO) defines decent work as productive work for women and men in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity. The International Labour Organization (2015) says that decent work entails every condition and provision at work that provides expected income and fulfills the aspirations of the employees. Decent work encompasses protection of workers' rights, combatting inequalities and child labour, eradicating forced labour, modern slavery and human trafficking, and promoting safe and secure working environments. Osman, Ladhani, Findlater and McKay (2017) buttressed that decent work, knowledge and skills that the curriculum of tertiary institutions should project must include labour market requirements, labour rights and inequalities in the workplace. Productive employment can be



explained as any form of employment that yields pecuniary and non-pecuniary rewards to employees, and as a result, the employees' family members and dependents are able to afford a level of consumption above poverty line (International Labour Office, 2012). Teaching and learning activities that will engender decent work and productive employment for all must focus on solving environmental problems through practical involvement of students in creating business opportunities in the communities through the different types of skills acquired.

Tertiary institutions have a key role in the digital transformation of our societies particularly in addressing the need for adequate skills. According to Okute and Agomuo (2014), tertiary institutions are the third tier of learning that provides training in an ever-increasing number of specialized knowledge and skills for modern society. Technical innovation, entrepreneurship and ICT skills development strategies or programmes for productive employment and decent work must be connected to education in collaboration with the government, social partners and investors, among others. Technical innovation skills, entrepreneurship skills and ICT skills places business education students and graduates on a platform of generating employment which leads to decent work. Business education students and graduates needs technical innovation skills, entrepreneurship skills as well as ICT skills that will enable them to be relevant in the global market, be self-reliant and have decent work. These skills are needed if business education students and graduates must contribute to the economy of the nation and also have a decent work. The performance of business education graduates in the current world of work that demands skills to have decent work makes it imperative to seek skills acquisition as a correlate to decent work in digital era among business education students in tertiary institutions in Akwa Ibom State.

Statement of the problem

Business education is a programme of study that prepares individual with multiple skills to function positively in the world of work, have a decent work and for entrepreneurial competencies for self-reliance. It is quite unfortunate that many students choose to study business education as their career and yet they refuse to work hard enough to acquire enough skills expected of them to function effectively in the world of work and also have a decent work. Osondu (2013) noted that business education graduates roam the street looking for white color jobs because they lack the skills needed to generate employment. Majority of business education graduates finds it difficult to have a decent work because they are misfit for today's workplace where skills are the order of the day. Therefore, the rate of unemployment and its consequences among business education graduates can stop if they acquire adequate skills for decent work. Hence, this study focused on skills acquisition as correlate to decent work in digital era among business education students in tertiary institutions in Akwa Ibom State.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study: they are as follows:

1. To what extent does technical innovation skills acquisition correlate with decent work in digital era among business education students in tertiary institutions in Akwa Ibom State.
2. To what extent does entrepreneurship skills acquisition correlate with decent work in digital era among business education students in tertiary institutions in Akwa Ibom State.
3. To what extent does ICT skills acquisition correlate with decent work in digital era among business education students in tertiary institutions in Akwa Ibom State.

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated and was tested at 0.05 level of significance. They are:



H0₁: There is no significant relationship between technical innovation skills acquisition and decent work in digital era among business education students in tertiary institutions in Akwa Ibom State.

H0₂: There is no significant relationship between entrepreneurship skills acquisition and decent work in digital era among business education students in tertiary institutions in Akwa Ibom State.

H0₃: There is no significant relationship between ICT skills acquisition and decent work in digital era among business education students in tertiary institutions in Akwa Ibom State.

Methodology

A correlational design was used for the study. The design was used to ascertain the perception of business education students on the relationship between skills acquisition and decent work in digital era among business education undergraduate students in tertiary institutions in Akwa Ibom State. The study was carried out in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. The population of this study was 625 business education students in tertiary institutions in Akwa Ibom State. Purposive sampling techniques was used to select final year students which comprises of 46 business education students from University of Uyo, Uyo, Akwa Ibom State and 130 students from Akwa Ibom State College of education Afaha-Nsit making the sample size for the study to be 176 business education students. The instrument for the data collection was the researcher's self-developed questionnaire which was divided into two clusters (1 and 2) titled "Skills Acquisition Questionnaire (SAQ), and Decent Work Questionnaire (DWQ). The reliability of the instrument was determined using Cronbach alpha method which SAQ yielded an index of 0.79 and DWQ yielded an index of 0.78. The questionnaire was administered by the researcher with the help of two research assistants. The response of the respondents was rated Very High Extent as 4 points, High Extent as 3 points, Low Extent as 2 points and Very Low Extent as 1 point. The data collected from the field was analyzed using Pearson Moment Correlation Coefficient to answer the research questions while Linear Regression Analysis was used to test the null hypothesis at a 0.05 level of significance. The decision for result acceptance was interpreted as:

- (i) 0.00-0.20 – Very Low Extent Coefficient.
- (ii) 0.21-0.39 – Low Extent Coefficient.
- (iii) 0.40-0.59 – High Extent Coefficient.
- (iv) 0.60-1.00 – Very High Extent Coefficient.

Items that scored 0.40 – 0.59 was regarded as high extent agreement while 0.00 – 0.39 was regarded as low extent agreement. More-so, the null hypothesis was not rejected where the calculated value is less than the significant level of 0.05 and rejected if the calculated value is equal to or greater than the significant level of 0.05.

Results

Research Question 1: To what extent do technical innovation skills acquisition correlate with decent work in digital era among business education students in tertiary institutions in Akwa Ibom State.



Table 1: Summary of Pearson Product Moment Correlation for the coefficient of technical innovation skills acquisition (TISA) and decent work (DW) in digital era among business education students

Variables	N	Σxy	R	R ²	DR	Remarks
TISA	176	1511	0.75	0.55	Positive	High positive relationship
DW	176	1455				

Technical innovation skills acquisition (TISA), Decent work (DW), Size (n), Summation (Σxy), Pearson r (r), coefficient of determination (R²), Direction of Relationship (DR) and Remarks

A Pearson Correlation Coefficient was computed and presented on table 1 to describe the coefficient of relationship between the extent technical innovation skills relate to decent work in digital era. The result shows that the coefficient of relationship between the extent technical innovation skills relate decent work with a coefficient of 0.75 which is positive and within the coefficient limit of +/-0.61-0.80 indicating high correlation between technical innovation skills and decent work. The coefficient of determination (R²) 0.55 indicates that 55% of the variance observed in decent work was attributed to technical innovation skills.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between technical innovation skills acquisition and decent work in digital era among business education students in tertiary institutions in Akwa Ibom State.

Table 2: Summary of t-test of correlation for the coefficient of relationship between technical innovation skills acquisition and decent work.

Variables	N	Σxy	R	A	Df	t _{cal}	t _{tab}	Decision
TISA	176	1511	0.75	0.05	175	20.78	1.96	Reject HO ₁
DW	176	1455						

Sample Size (n), Summation (Σxy), Coefficient of Relationship (r), Alpha Level (α), Degree of Freedom (df) and t-test of Significance of Simple Linear Correlation between two Variables

A t-test of significance of simple linear correlation statistic was computed and presented on table 2 to display the significance of coefficient of relationship between technical innovation skills and decent work in digital era. The result indicates the degree of freedom as 175 and the t-calculated value of 20.78 is greater than the t-tabulated value of 1.96. Since the-calculated value is greater than the t-tabulated value, the researcher therefore rejected the null hypothesis; thus, deducing that the coefficient of significant relationship between technical innovation skills and decent work is significant.



Research Question 2: To what extent do entrepreneurship skills acquisition correlate with decent work in digital era among business education students in tertiary institutions in Akwa Ibom State.

Table 3: Summary of Pearson Product Moment Correlation for the coefficient of entrepreneurship skills acquisition (ESA) and decent work (DW) in digital era among business education students

Variables	N	Σxy	R	R ²	DR	Remarks
ESA	176	1516	0.88	0.77	Positive	High positive relationship
DW	176	1498				

Entrepreneurship skills acquisition (ESA), Decent work (DW), Size (n), Summation (Σxy), Pearson r (r), coefficient of determination (R²), Direction of Relationship (DR) and Remarks

The table 3 revealed a Pearson Correlation Coefficient computed of 0.88 which was positive and within the coefficient limit of +/-0.81-0.99, indicating a very high correlation between entrepreneurship skills and decent work in digital era. The coefficient of determination (R²) 0.77 indicates that 77% of the variance observed in entrepreneurship skills acquisition was attributed to decent work among business education students.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant relationship between technical entrepreneurship skills acquisition and decent work in digital era among business education students in tertiary institutions in Akwa Ibom State.

Table 4: Summary of t-test of correlation for the coefficient of relationship between entrepreneurship skills acquisition and decent work in digital era.

Variables	N	Σxy	R	A	Df	t _{cal}	t _{tab}	Decision
ESA	176	1516	0.88	0.05	175	33.45	1.96	Reject HO ₂
DW	176	1498						

Sample Size (n), Summation (Σxy), Coefficient of Relationship (r), Alpha Level (α), Degree of Freedom (df) and t-test of Significance of Simple Linear Correlation between two Variables

On table 4, a t-test of significance of simple linear correlation statistic was computed to display the significance of coefficient of relationship between entrepreneurship skills acquisition and decent work in digital era. The result indicates the degree of freedom as 175 and the t-calculated value of 33.45 which is greater than the t-tabulated value of 1.96. Since the t-calculated value is greater than the t-tabulated value, the researcher therefore rejected the null hypothesis; thus, deducing that the coefficient of significant relationship between entrepreneurship skills acquisition and decent work in digital ear among business education students is significant.



Research Question 3: To what extent do ICT skills acquisition correlate with decent work in digital era among business education students in tertiary institutions in Akwa Ibom State.

Table 5: Summary of Pearson Product Moment Correlation for the coefficient of ICT skills acquisition (ICTSA) and decent work (DW) in digital era among business education students

Variables	N	Σxy	R	R^2	DR	Remarks
ICTSA	176	1542				
			0.77	0.58	Positive	Positive relationship
DW	176	1532				

ICT skills acquisition (ICTSA), Decent work (DW) Size (n), Summation (Σxy), Pearson r (r), coefficient of determination (R^2), Direction of Relationship (DR) and Remarks

The values in table 5, shows the computed Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (r) was of 0.77 which is positive and within the coefficient limit of 0.61-0.80 implying a high relationship between information and communication technology skills acquisition and decent work in digital era among business education students. The result shows that the coefficient of relationship between the extent information and communication technology skills acquisition relates to decent work in digital era among business education students with a coefficient of 0.77. The coefficient of determination (R^2) 0.58 indicates that 58% of the variance observed in decent among business education students was accounted for by information and communication technology skills acquisition.

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant relationship between technical ICT skills acquisition and decent work in digital era among business education students in tertiary institutions in Akwa Ibom State

Table 6: Summary of t-test of correlation for the coefficient of relationship between ICT skills acquisition and decent work in digital era

Variables	N	Σxy	R	A	Df	t_{cal}	t_{tab}	Decision
ICTSA	176	1542						
			0.77	0.05	175	22.65	1.96	Reject H_{O_3}
DW	176	1532						

Sample Size (n), Summation (Σxy), Coefficient of Relationship (r), Alpha Level (α), Degree of Freedom (df) and t-test of Significance of Simple Linear Correlation between two Variables

Table 6 depicts a t-test of significance of simple linear correlation statistic on significant relationship between information and communication technology skills acquisition and the decent work among business education students. The result indicates the degree of freedom as 175 and the t calculated value of 22.65 which is greater than the t-tabulated value of 1.96. Since the-calculated value is greater than the t-tabulated value, it is therefore to reject the null hypothesis of no significant



relationship and conclude that there was a significant relationship between information and communication technology skills acquisition and decent work among business education students.

Discussion of Findings

The result in research question one revealed that technical innovation skills are very imperative skills needed to succeed in business ventures as well as have a decent work. This is in line with agreement with Ubaka (2012) who noted that for one to succeed in the world of work he must possess skills of technical innovation, planning, communication, management, ICT etc. Furthermore, the result in hypothesis one deduced that the coefficient of significant relationship between technical innovation skills and decent work is significant. The findings in research question two shows that entrepreneurship skills correlate with decent work among business education students. The result of this finding is in consonance with the study of Eke, Igwesi and Orji (2012) which revealed that entrepreneurship skills inculcates creative innovative, productive and managerial skills needed in business enterprises for self-reliance among students. Furthermore, the result in hypothesis two deduced that the coefficient of significant relationship between entrepreneurship skills acquisition and decent work is significant.

The analysis in research question three revealed that information and communication technology skills acquisition have a significant influence on decent work of business education students. The implication is that when a student acquires the necessary ICT skills, he is likely to be self-reliant or employed in an organization that needs such skill and also have a decent work. The result is in consonance with the view of Australian computer society (ACS, 2012), which revealed that ICT represents one of most exciting areas of employment for new graduates of higher institution, with many skills to work as computing professional in the finance, estate, and business sectors.

Conclusion

Technical innovation skills, entrepreneurship skills and ICT skills place business education students and graduates on a platform of generating employment which leads to decent work. Arising from the findings of the study, it can be concluded that business education students need technical innovation skills, entrepreneurship skills as well as ICT skills that will enable them to be relevant in the global market, be self-reliant and have decent work. These skills are needed if they must contribute to the economy of the nation and also have a decent work. Business education students as a result of their specialization need more of these skills so as to succeed in the world of work and have a decent work. Technical innovation skills entrepreneurship skills and ICT significantly influence decent work among business education undergraduates in Awka Ibom State.

Recommendation

The following recommendations came from the study. They are:

1. Technical innovation skills should be emphasized as technology is imperative. This requires a holistic linking of technology to industry through an overhaul of curricula and investment prioritization. The output from various tiers of education should reflect human capital development needs.
2. Entrepreneurship courses should be given priorities in the time table schedule of business education programme to enable students acquire entrepreneurship skills for self and decent work on graduation.
3. ICT skills should be included in the curriculum of business education to enable students acquire the ICT skills so as to make them employable or self-employed and also have a decent work upon graduation.

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