



## **INSTITUTION-COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP FOR DIGITAL RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT AND SELF-EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS AMONG BUSINESS EDUCATION STUDENTS IN TERTIARY INSTITUTION IN RIVERS STATE**

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### **Abstract**

*This study investigated the relationship between institution-community partnership for digital resources development and self-employability skills development among business education students in tertiary institution in Rivers State. Three specific objectives, three research questions and one hypothesis guided the study. Descriptive correlational research design was adopted for the study. The population and sample of the study consisted of 81 Business Educators in the four tertiary institutions offering Business Education in Rivers State during the 2021/2022 academic session. Structured questionnaire was used for data collection. The face validated questionnaire was subjected to reliability testing using Cronbach Alpha and obtained a coefficient of 0.84 for all the items. Data collected for this study were analysed using mean to answer research questions 1 and 2. Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) was used to answer research question 3 as well as test the hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance. The results related to specific one revealed the extent of institution-community partnership for digital resources development in business education programme in Rivers State include private sectors providing digital resources and human resources to build digital capacity of lecturers and students. The results related to specific two revealed that the self-employability skills that can be developed among business education students through institution-community partnership model. The results related to specific three revealed that there is positive relationship between Institution Community Partnership for digital resource development and self-employability skills development among business education students in tertiary institution in Rivers State. Based on the finding, it was recommended among others that Business education administrators should formed synergy with private enterprises within their local communities who are well equipped technological in order to drive digital resource development.*

*Keywords: technology, digital resources, business education, self-employability*



## **Introduction**

Advancement in technology has continued to affect the nature of human capital required across the spectrum of functional sectors in every economy. This is driven by the fact that organizations are enthusiastic in taking advantage of the benefits derivable from integrating technological offerings in their processes. The benefits which Azih (2013) noted include the unabatedly influence of technological offerings on the processes of work, its quality, speed of delivery, flexibility to work and productivity. Consequently, organizations are now in search of human resources with superior digital knowledge, skills and attitude that support their technological usage. The implication of these human capital requirements is that all educational programmes (Business education inclusive) must lean on and utilize digital resources capable of enhancing their students' digital knowledge, skills and attitude to make them fit for the purpose of 21<sup>st</sup> century digitalized labour market.

Digital resources for enhancing students' digital knowledge and skills can be viewed from different perspectives which include digital devices such as desktop computer, android ipad, Apple i-phones, laptops; software and apps for teaching and simulations; digital contents accessible online or any material presented in digital format. Supporting this position, Sreekumar (2020) defined digital resource as any resource that requires access to the computer or any electronic device in order to access a collection of data, be it in text format, that is, full-text database, electronic journals, digital image collections, other multimedia products in a combination of numerical, graphic or temporal values, such as a commercially available title that was published for the purpose of commercialization. Baron (2021) noted that digital resources in education have to do with any websites, software, and app included in course delivery to enhance learning digitally.

Ordu and Abdulkarim (2020) opined that the integration and utilization of digital technological offerings in Business education depend on the availability of required human resources with the requisite digital skills for utilizing digital devices in developing and facilitating the use of digital content in achieving the goal of programme. Issues relating to availability and utilization of digital devices, software and applications in Business education have received much attention over the years. Amoor (2010) noted that some Business education lecturers are square pegs in round holes when it comes to the issue of utilizing digital technology in teaching and learning process. In addition, Ugwu (2016) explained that non-availability of modern digital technological resources and poor skills of business educators as factors limiting students' practical exposures and inadequate employability skills acquisition in Business Education. Abdulkarim and Onwuchekwa (2020) stated that only younger business educators within the ages of 25 to 45 years possessed more ICT skills for ICT resources utilization in Business Education programme. Ordu and Abdulkarim (2020) informed that business educators utilized e-learning digital technologies to a very low extent.

The result of these findings in Business Education programme in Nigeria can be seen in the obvious digital divide among graduates of the programme and how it affects their self-employability skills for 21<sup>st</sup> century business world. Consequently, to address issues surrounding the non-availability of digital devices, inadequate digital skills among Business educators, and lack of exposure of students to digital resources in Business Education, new strategies for digital resources development needs to be devised for assessment and acceptance among stakeholders.

Strategies for developing digital resources outlined in existing literature include but not limited to Institution-Community-Partnership, Digital Resource Development Trust Fund, and teachers' professional development in digital competencies, development of culturally responsive digital content; and utilizing institutional-based portals to disseminate learning materials (Ejiofor & Osinem, 2010; Egboka, 2012; Chigbu & Dim, 2012; Clough & Smithsonian Institution, 2013; Ordu & Abdulkarim, 2019). Nevertheless, within the context of this work, Institution-Community-Partnership and strategy for digital resource development will be investigated. For effective development and



utilization of digital resource for employability competency skill development in business education programme, there is need to adopt the model which Ordu and Abdulkarim (2019) referred to as Institution-Community-Partnership (ICP) strategies. This model can come in different forms between institutions offering Business Education programme and ICT experts within and outside the institutions who own small business enterprises with facilities that can be used in developing digital resources for Business Education courses. This can be used to expose both Business Educators and their students to digital technological devices on a mentor-mentee basis in order to equip them with basic training (Ordu, 2021) on how to effectively develop digital contents for the programme. Burgess and Anderson (2020) investigated how to Leverage on community partnerships to engage digitally foreign learners in response to COVID-19 and reported that the partnership provided the use of blog site to enhance remote learning engagement with students and families in a high poverty community. Lee (2020) also reported that through community-school partnership digital inequalities among educators and students were overcome as many without access to digital facilities were able to access digital resources in local organizations.

Self-employability skills are abilities required of Business Education students to be fit to take up either self-employment or employment opportunities in today's digital business world. Azih and Wagbara (2018) opined that self-employability skills in Business education are considered as essential qualifications for job creation and hence have become necessary for graduating students' success within a business world. Amesi (2018) and Ordu (2021) noted that the acquisition of self-employability skills is essential to taking up employment opportunities in the business world as evidence has shown that when there is employment opportunity, many graduates lack the requisite skills. Kevin, *et al.* (2011) defined employability skills as technical and discipline related skills which graduates are expected to have developed for easy transition from school to the world of work. Ordu (2021) explained that ICP training can be done and utilize to facilitate teaching and learning of employability skills relevant for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Meager, *et al.* (2011) noted that employability skills required by students for self-employment in digital era include interpersonal skills, digital literacy skills, problem-solving skills, and collaborative skills. In the context of this work, self-employability skills would be limited to digital skills, problem solving skills and collaborative skills.

Okeke-Ezeanyanwu and Nweke (2021) investigated strategies for improving employability skills acquisition of business education students in e-world in tertiary institutions and reported the need to improve the digital literacy of teachers and the use of e-portfolio as strategies for improving employability skills acquisition of business education students in tertiary institutions. However, a cursory examination of these existing studies showed that none has investigated the relationship between Institution-community partnership for digital resources development and self-employability skills development in business education programme in Rivers state, hence, the gap that the current study intends to fill.

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the extent of institution-community partnership for digital resources development in business education programme in tertiary institutions in Rivers state?
2. What is the level of self-employability skills development among business education students in Rivers state?
3. What is the relationship between the extent of institution-community partnership for digital resource development and self-employability skills development among Business Education students in tertiary institutions in Rivers state?



### Hypothesis

The following hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

1. There is no significant relationship between the extent of institution-community partnership for digital resource development and self-employability skills development among Business Education students in tertiary institutions in Rivers state

### Method

Descriptive correlation research design was adopted for the study. This research design is deemed appropriate because it establishes the relationship between variables under investigation. According to Davidson, et al. (2019), this research design is preferable when establishing the relationship between two or more variables.

The study was conducted in Rivers States in four tertiary institutions that offer Business Education programme namely, Rivers State University, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, University of Port-Harcourt and Federal College of Education (Tech.), Omoku - Rivers State. The presence of these four institutions makes the area of the study appropriate for the study.

The population of this study consisted of 81 Business Educators in the four tertiary institutions offering Business Education in Rivers State during the 2021/2022 academic session. The breakdown of the population is as show in the table below:

**Table 1: Population Distribution of Business Educators**

S/N	Name of Institution	Business Educators
1.	IAUE	10
2.	RSU	23
3.	UNIPOINT	05
4.	FCE(T), Omoku	43
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>81</b>

**Source:** Human Resource units (2021)

The entire 81 Business Educators from the four tertiary institutions offering Business Education programme at the undergraduate level were used as sample of the study. The entire population was used because it is a manageable size for a descriptive-correlation research study. Therefore, no sampling technique was adopted for the study.

A researcher's structured designed questionnaire titled "Institution-Community Partnership for Digital Resources Development and Self-Employability Skills Development in Business Education Programme Questionnaire (ICPDRDSESDBEQ)" was used for the study. The instrument contains 10 items. The instrument is divided into three sections. Section A dealt with demographic data of the respondents, section B dealt with Business Educators agreement with the statements on the strategy for digital resources development; while section C concentrated on assessing Business Educators agreement with whether the strategy would assist students to develop self-employability skills. The response options for the entire items are based on 4 points rating scales of Strongly Agree (SA- 4points), Agree (A - 3points), Disagree (D - 2), and Strongly Disagree (SD- 1point).

The face validity of the instrument was ascertained by two Business educators and one Test and Measurement expert in Ignatius Ajuru University of Education (IAUE), Port-Harcourt, Rivers State. Their contributions were used to correct the instrument before the final copy will be produced.

The reliability of the instrument was determined using the Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient. To compute the reliability, responses from 10 Business Educators from Niger-Delta University, Bayelsa State who are not part of the study were used. The Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 23.0. The reliability index obtained for all the items was 0.84. The instrument was personally administered by the researcher to the lecturers within an interval of two weeks. The filled questionnaire copies were collated and data presented for analysis.



Data collected for this study were analyzed using mean statistics to answer research questions 1 and 2 and Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) was used to answer the research question 3 as well as to test the hypothesis posed at 0.05 level of significance. For the relationship scale interpretation, the scales by Bryman and Bell (2011) were used:

- r = 00 – 0.19 ‘very weak relationship
- r = 0.20 – 0.30 ‘weak’,
- r = 0.40 – 0.59 ‘moderate relationship’,
- r = 0.60 – 0.79 ‘strong’,
- r = 0.80 – 1.00 ‘very strong’

## Results and Discussion

**Research Question 1:** What is the extent of institution-community partnership for digital resources development in business education programme in tertiary institutions in Rivers state?

**Table 2: Summary of mean value on institution-community partnership for digital development in business education programme.**

S/N	Institution-Community Partnership	Mean	Remark
1.	Tertiary institutions use local ICT business enterprises.	1.35	SD
2.	Private sectors provide digital resources to tertiary institutions.	2.58	A
3.	Private sectors provide human resources to build digital capacity of lecturers and students in tertiary institutions	2.52	A
4.	Using private public partnership to install institution’s digital facilities	1.64	D
5.	Tertiary institutions use local business enterprise hotspot and Wifi.	1.75	D

Source: Field survey, 2022

Table 2 shows that the respondents agreed that private sectors provide digital resources to tertiary institutions and also provide human resources to build digital capacity of lecturers and students in tertiary institutions with mean score of 2.58 and 2.52 respectively. In addition, the respondents disagreed that tertiary institutions access local business enterprises and use private public partnership to install institution’s digital facilities with mean score of 1.64 and 1.75. The respondents also strongly disagreed that tertiary institutions use local business enterprise hotspots and Wifi in Rivers State.

**Research question 2:** What are the self-employability skills that can be developed among business education students through institution-community partnership in Rivers state?

**Table 3: Summary of mean value on self-employability skills that can be developed among business education students through institution-community partnership.**

S/N	Self-employability skills	Mean	Remark
1.	Ability to utilize computer to accomplish daily business operations.	2.65	A
2.	Ability to surf the internet for business opportunity.	2.66	A
3.	Ability to develop digital content for promoting self-business.	2.52	A
4	Ability to identify digital related problem with using digital devices for business operations.	2.54	A
5.	Ability to analyse digital problem.	2.72	A
6.	Ability to think out solution to digital business problem.	2.56	A
7.	Ability to collaborate with peers using digital platform.	2.53	A

Source: Field survey, 2022



Table 3 shows that the respondents agreed that self-employability skills such as ability to utilize computer to accomplish daily business operations, ability to surf the internet for business opportunity, ability to develop digital content for promoting self-business, ability to identify digital related problem with using digital devices for business operations, ability to analyse digital problem, ability to think out solution to digital business problem, and ability to collaborate with peers using digital platform can be developed among business education students through institution-community partnership with mean score of 2.65, 2.66, 2.52, 2.54, 2.72, 2.56 and 2.53.

**Research question 3:** What is the relationship between the extent of institution-community partnership for digital resource development and self-employability skills development among Business Education students in tertiary institutions in Rivers state?

**Hypothesis 1:** There is no significant relationship between the extent of institution-community partnership for digital resource development and self-employability skills that can be developed among business education students in tertiary institutions in Rivers state.

**Table 4: Summary of Pearson Product Moment Correlation on the relationship and significant relationship between Institution Community Partnership for Digital Resource Development and digital skills as self-employability skills in Business Education Programme**

		Institution Community Partnership Collaboration for Digital Resource Development skills	
Institution Community Partnership for Digital Resource Development	Pearson Correlation	1	.500**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	74	74
Collaboration skills	Pearson Correlation	.500**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	74	74

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 4 answers research question 3 and the hypothesis posed. The results show  $r = 0.500$ ,  $p < 0.05$  at 0.000. This means that there is a moderate relationship between Institution Community Partnership for digital resource development and self-employability skills in Business Education programme. Since the  $r$  value obtained at 0.000 is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis is therefore rejected. This means that there is significant relationship between Institution Community Partnership for digital resource development and digital skills as self-employability skills in business education programme.

**Discussion of Major Findings**

The results in research question one show that the extent of institution-community partnership for digital resources development in business education programme in Rivers State include private sectors providing digital resources and human resources to build digital capacity of lecturers and students. This finding is supported by the finding of Lee (2020), who reported that through community-school partnership, digital inequalities among educators and students were overcome as many without access to digital facilities were able to access digital resources in local



organizations. This finding is also supported by position of Ordu (2021) who reported that ICP model can be used to expose both Business Educators and their students to digital technological devices on a mentor-mentee basis in order to equip them with basic training.

The results in research question 2 revealed that the self-employability skills that can be developed among business education students through institution-community partnership model include ability to utilize computer to accomplish daily business operations, surf the internet for business opportunity, develop digital content for promoting self-business, identify digital related problem with using digital devices for business operations, analyze digital problem, think out solution to digital business problem, collaborate with peers using digital platform. Ordu (2021) reported that ICP model can be utilized to facilitate teaching and learning of employability skills relevant for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The results in research question 3 showed that there are some elements of moderate relationships between the concept of Institution-Community Partnership model (ICPM) in the course of digital resource development and the long-discussed self-employability skills acquisition of students in business education. Secondly, due to the rejection of the null hypothesis observed in *r*-value that is lower than 0.05, this presupposes that there is a relationship between ICPM for the development of digital resources and digital skills acquisition in the employment needs of business education graduates. As is evident in this result, the implication is that the application of digital resource for teaching and learning would allow students to access learning contents thereby enhancing their desire of acquiring the needed competencies for their economic survivals. This finding is supported by the findings of Burgess and Anderson (2020) when they reported that through a philanthropic partnership with spectrum Internet, what seemed to be a community-based Internet resource center was used to enhance students access to digital resources even during the COVID-19 season. The finding is also supported by the finding of Lee (2020) who reported that the partnership with community-based enterprises enhanced the development of e-book and provided students with on-site computer laboratories for skills development.

### **Conclusions**

Based the findings of this study, it can be concluded that Institution-Community Partnership as strategy for digital resources development would influence self-employability skills development among Business Education students. It can be concluded that Institution-Community Partnership is significant for digital resource development in Business Education because the modern technology installed to drive job performance in community based private enterprises are mostly not found in department running this programme. Consequently, this model of partnership can be used to leverage on the private sectors digital resources for business education students' self-employability skills development.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings and conclusions drawn, the following recommendations are put forward for implementation:

1. Business education administrators should be in synergy with private enterprises within their local communities who are well equipped technological in order to drive digital resource development. The synergy may be that of using the private enterprises technology to equip students with digital skills or using them to develop and host online digital resources.
2. Business educators should create opportunities that would enable students to visit collaborating private enterprises within their local community in order to utilize their technology to perform some academic work as this can improve on problem solving and collaborative skills.



3. Business education administration should canvass for Tertiary Education Trust Fund sponsorship for their departments to be digitally equipped for digital resource development as well as capacity building for academics and equipped them to use knowledge and skills development to enhance students' self-employability skills.

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