

ASSESSING TRANSVERSAL SKILLS NEEDED FOR ENTREPRENEURIAL DEVELOPMENT OF BUSINESS EDUCATION STUDENTS IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN OGUN STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

Recurrent cases of business collapse and failure call for assessing business owners' transversal skills. Therefore, this study evaluated the transversal skills needed for entrepreneurial development of business education students in tertiary institutions in Ogun State. Three purposes and three research questions guided the study. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design, with a population of 700 regular final-year business education students registered for the 2024/2025 academic session at 4 public tertiary institutions offering the Business Education Programme in Ogun State. The sample comprised 255 respondents. The sample size was based on Taro Yamani's formula for sample selection. A multi-stage sampling technique was used for selecting the sample. A structured questionnaire titled "Transversal Skills Needed for Entrepreneurial Development Questionnaire" (TSNEDQ) was used as the data collection instrument. Experts validated the instrument, and the reliability coefficient was 0.82. The research questions were answered using frequency tables, mean, and standard deviation. The study's findings revealed that leadership, negotiation, networking, communication, and time management are essential transversal skills for the entrepreneurial development of business education students. It was further revealed that widespread corruption, moral decadence, a poor reward system, and poor mental health are among the challenges in inculcating transversal skills in business education students. Moreover, the study revealed that strategies for inculcating transversal skills in business education students can be classified into teacher-related and student-oriented strategies. Finally, the study recommended, among other things, that transversal skills be integrated into the entrepreneurial training of business education students in tertiary institutions.

Keywords: Entrepreneurial Development, Business Education Students, Soft Skills, Technical Skills, and Tertiary Institutions.

Introduction

The contemporary business world is associated with vast and fascinating problems. It encompasses the use of the latest scientific knowledge and technical know-how, the challenges and difficulties encountered in converting raw materials into saleable products, and the problems encountered in raising and spending money for the success of business units. Given the multidimensional challenges of the contemporary business landscape, students at all levels must be exposed to relevant entrepreneurship training. According to Atah et al. (2022), entrepreneurial development is the process of training in entrepreneurship by generating ideas, taking business risks in a dynamic environment, and utilising opportunities to the fullest for financial gain. Being entrepreneurial means being inventive, creative, and willing to take calculated risks to succeed. An entrepreneur is someone inventive, resourceful, skilled, and willing to take risks to succeed in business. The entrepreneur is a

wealth creator and a pacesetter. The purpose of entrepreneurial development is to motivate and prepare individuals to pursue self-employment.

A major catalyst for success in entrepreneurship is the possession of transversal skills by potential and practising entrepreneurs. Transversal skills are abilities that can be applied across many jobs, tasks, and life situations, rather than being limited to a single context. Transversal skills are also known as soft skills or twenty-first-century skills. They can be described as the skills, habits, and behaviours that distinguish individuals as professionals, that make the difference when undertaking a project, resolving a conflict, and relating with others. Leadership, productivity, team management, sales, problem-solving, adaptability, and communication skills are among the most valued transversal skills for an entrepreneur. Transversal skills are the most essential ingredients for success in entrepreneurial endeavours.

In this context, entrepreneurial development refers to the process in which instructors and learners deliberately take actions to ensure that Business education students acquire the competencies needed to establish, sustain, and expand business ventures. Ultimately, a proper blend of entrepreneurial competencies and transversal skills is indispensable for business success. It is on this premise that this study assessed transversal skills needed for entrepreneurial development of business education students in tertiary institutions in Ogun State, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Entrepreneurship education was integrated into the curricula of tertiary institutions in Nigeria over two decades ago. The purpose of the integration was to tame the monster of unemployment among graduates of Nigerian tertiary institutions. However, the problems of unemployment and underemployment are still common in Nigerian society, with many jobless graduates roaming the streets in search of collar jobs, and quite a number of them are not employable. The researchers' concern is that the type of entrepreneurship education offered in the Nigerian education system has not produced graduates who are self-reliant and self-employed. The researchers are also concerned that transversal skills have minimal mention in the entrepreneurial programmes of tertiary institutions in Nigeria. Furthermore, too much emphasis on theories has significantly impeded the acquisition of transversal skills by Business education students, hence the need for this study.

Purpose of the Study

The primary purpose of this study was to assess the transversal skills needed for entrepreneurial development of business education students in tertiary institutions in Ogun State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Identify transversal skills needed for entrepreneurial development of business education students in tertiary institutions.
2. Investigate the challenges of acquiring transversal skills by business education students in tertiary institutions.
3. Examine the strategies for inculcating transversal skills in business education students in tertiary institutions.

Research Questions

The following research questions were answered in the study:

1. What are the transversal skills needed for entrepreneurial development of business education students in tertiary institutions?
2. What are the challenges of acquiring transversal skills by business education students in tertiary institutions?

3. What are the strategies for inculcating transversal skills in business education students in tertiary institutions?

Review of Related Literature

Superior performers do not only possess high levels of technical skills, but also demonstrate behavioural skills in their daily tasks. It is noteworthy that excellent transversal skills are continually developed through day-to-day experience and practice in the workplace. This is demonstrated in the diagram below:

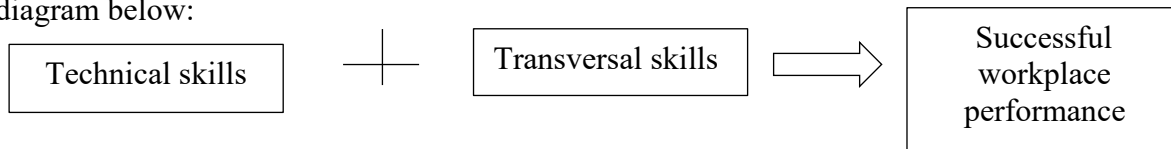


Figure 1: Transversal Skills Needed for Entrepreneurial Development.

Source: Researchers' field survey (2025)

To succeed in business, business.com (2024) identified the following as essential soft skills: delegation, negotiation, strategic planning, team building, analysis, general management, and time management. In addition, Allsworth (2023) asserted that the following are essential transversal skills for entrepreneurs to build successful businesses: communication, leadership, team-building, problem-solving, time management, and interpersonal skills. The author explained that assessing and developing soft skills required commitment but yield immense rewards.

Youth Business International (YBI) (2024) identified different skill frameworks for youth and adult entrepreneurs to succeed. They include: interpersonal skills; creative and problem-solving skills; information, opportunity, and management skills; growth-mindset skills. Although there is no consensus on precisely what constitutes transversal skills, various experts agree that they can be described as a set of competencies, behaviours, attitudes, personal qualities, motives, and thought processes that enable individuals to perform well and achieve their goals, work well with others, and effectively navigate their environment.

Transversal skills are, therefore, interpersonal skills such as team building, time management, delegation, conflict resolution, and stress management. The definition has been expanded over time to include resilience, curiosity, risk-taking, adaptability, and creativity or innovation. Unlike technical knowledge and skills, transversal skills are more of an attitude and behaviour. There is growing evidence that transversal skills are critical to business performance. Furthermore, transversal skills have wider benefits for individuals. Many people combine running a business with other income-generating activities. They may also be juggling education or training.

Challenges of Acquiring Transversal Skills for Entrepreneurial Development

It is pretty evident that the entrepreneurial development of business education is incomplete without the acquisition of transversal skills. However, the acquisition of transversal skills is often hampered by daunting challenges. Tombari (2016) identified the following challenges to youths' acquisition of transversal skills: government failure to provide an enabling environment, insatiable greed for quick wealth among many youths, moral decadence in society, and a paucity of positive role models or mentors. In addition, Kulo and Agbodo (2016) opined that; poor reward system in the society, poor attitude to entrepreneurship, incompetency of constructors, widespread corruption at all levels, collapse of the societal value system, covetousness, greed, lack of contentment, laziness, and poor mental health are some of the challenges of acquiring soft skills by youths in the Nigerian society.

From the foregoing, it is clear that a lack of contentment, laziness, and poor mental health hampers business education students' acquisition of transversal skills.

Strategies for Inculcating Transversal Skills in Business Education Students

Entrepreneurial development takes place both inside and outside the classroom, in dynamic environments where knowledge intersects with doing and creative experimentation, where students and faculty learn together through the productive application of knowledge. It is noteworthy that being an entrepreneur entails developing skills and attitudes that can only be acquired through experience. Universidad Politécnica de Valencia (UPV). and Erasmus (2024) asserted that the inclusion of robotics and programming in the classroom encourages the development of skills such as teamwork, leadership, problem-solving, and adaptation to change. They further explained that the following attributes are essential for the development of entrepreneurship in the classroom: Ability to take responsibility and readiness for constant learning; management and planning skills to lead and implement a project from scratch; ability to adapt to change and solve problems to carry out the necessary actions in case of unforeseen circumstances; Emotional control, self-knowledge, self-esteem, and self-criticism; thinking creatively and taking risks.

Nwabufu (2016) identified the following strategies for promoting entrepreneurship development among students in tertiary institutions in Kwara State, Nigeria Enhancing students' autonomy as entrepreneurs; encouraging students to interview employers and community leaders to acquire appropriate transversal skills for entrepreneurship; helping students to develop transversal skills and competencies to face the demand and challenges of entrepreneurship; mandating students to interact with small business owners to acquire soft skills needed for entrepreneurship. Furthermore, Onyesom (2016) identified the following strategies for teaching entrepreneurial development in polytechnics in Delta state, Nigeria. Self-instructions of soft skills; formation of business clubs on campus; class discussion on soft skills needed for entrepreneurial development; excursion to business organisations; organising class debates for developing high reasoning ability; use of games and simulations to exhibit entrepreneurial traits; writing business plans and developing them before the class members; building confidence in the students through pep talks.

In addition to the aforementioned strategies, Utoware and Eneogwe (2016) reported that strategy for the effective teaching and learning of entrepreneurship in business education can be categorised into teacher-related and student-oriented strategies. Some teacher-related strategies for inculcating soft skills include: organising cooperative work experience programmes for students, encouraging students to think positively, organising result-oriented seminars on how to acquire transversal skills, while some student-oriented strategies include: experimental learning, interaction with small business owners, engagement in vacation jobs, sharing experiences among themselves, and initiating personal involvement in project planning. From the foregoing, it is clear that transversal skills are best acquired through personal experience, especially outside the classroom.

Review of Related Empirical Studies

The assessment of transversal skills needed by business education students for entrepreneurial development in Ogun State, Nigeria, was found to be consistent with findings from various studies. A couple of these studies were examined and summarised below:

Atah et. al. (2022) evaluated the soft skills required by business education students for entrepreneurial development in Cross River State, Nigeria. To achieve the objectives of the study, two research questions were raised, and two hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. A survey research design was adopted for the study. The population comprised 120 students in business education. The

census sampling technique was adopted. A validated researcher-made four-point rating scale questionnaire titled, *Evaluating Soft Skills Competencies Required by Business Education Students for Entrepreneurship Development (ESSCRBESEDQ)*” was used for data collection. The instrument was face- and content-validated by three research experts. A reliability coefficient of .87 was obtained for the instrument using Cronbach's alpha following a pilot test. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer all research questions, and an independent-samples t-test was used to test the null hypotheses at the 0.05 level of significance. Findings of the study revealed that business education students require organisational and customer service skills to develop, manage, and sustain their businesses, thereby supporting economic growth and development in Nigeria.

Alqatawenh and Al-sumet (2021) examined soft skills and their relationship with entrepreneurial orientation among students of the School of Business at Mu'tah University, Jordan. To achieve the study objectives, five hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. The study population consisted of 2,049 students from the Faculty of Business at Mu'tah University, enrolled in the 2020/2021 academic year. The sample was selected using convenience sampling and comprised 275 students. A structured questionnaire was used to collect data. Experts in Business Administration validated the instrument, and the instrument's reliability was assessed using the Cronbach alpha formula, yielding a coefficient of 0.95. The data collected were analysed using Pearson Product-Moment Correlation (PPMC). The study's findings showed a strong positive relationship between soft skills and entrepreneurial orientation among students in the Faculty of Business at Mu'tah University, with a correlation Coefficient of 0.66, statistically significant at the 0.01 level.

Saron et al. (2020) examined the importance of soft skills development for enhancing entrepreneurial capacity. The three key soft skills the researchers examined were communication, leadership, and critical and problem-solving skills, while entrepreneurial capacity was the study's dependent variable. The researcher adopted a qualitative method, using an interview protocol as the instrument, to conduct in-depth interviews. Data were analysed using content analysis. Findings revealed that critical thinking and problem-solving skills are the most significant soft skills for helping entrepreneurs improve their competitiveness and productivity.

Utoware and Eneogwe (2016) sought to ascertain strategies for effective teaching and learning of entrepreneurship in tertiary institutions in Delta State, Nigeria. Two research questions were raised, and two hypotheses were formulated and tested at the 0.05 significance level. The descriptive survey research was adopted. The study population comprised 97 business educators from tertiary institutions in Delta State. There was no sampling since the 97 business educators were manageable in number, and the population was retained as the sample. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire with 27 items. Three experts validated the instrument, and its reliability coefficient was 0.87. The data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) to answer the research questions and inferential statistics (t-test) to test the hypotheses. Findings revealed that teacher-related and student-oriented strategies were considered adequate for teaching and learning entrepreneurship. It was also revealed that gender and experience had no significant influence on business educators' assessment of the effectiveness of teaching strategies.

Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The descriptive survey research design is suitable for the study because it involves collecting and analysing data from a representative sample of the population. The population consisted of 700 final year business education students registered for the 2024/2025 academic session in four public tertiary institutions in Ogun State, while the sample comprised 225 respondents, as shown below:

Table 1: Population and sample of the study

| Institutions | Population | Sample |
|--|------------|------------|
| Federal College of Education, Abeokuta | 150 | 54 |
| Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye | 190 | 69 |
| Sikiru Adetona College of Education, Science and Technology, Omu-Ijebu | 40 | 15 |
| Tai Solarin University of Education, Ijagun | 320 | 117 |
| Total | 700 | 225 |

Source: Offices of the Heads of Department

The sample comprised 255 final year business education students who were selected based on Taro Yamani's formulas, as follows:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where n=Sample

N=Population size

e= error limit

1= constant

$$\begin{aligned}
 \text{Therefore, sample} &= \frac{700}{1 + 700(0.05)^2} \\
 &= \frac{700}{1 + 700(0.0025)} \\
 &= \frac{700}{1 + 1.75} \\
 &= \frac{700}{2.75} \\
 &= 254.54 \\
 \text{Sample} &= 255
 \end{aligned}$$

The sample comprised 255 final-year business education students selected using Taro Yamani's formula. Multistage sampling was used in this study. At the first stage, purposive sampling was used to select four public tertiary institutions in Ogun State that offer the Business Teacher Education programme. At the second stage, purposive sampling was used to select 700 full-time final-year students from the four selected tertiary institutions. At the third stage, proportionate stratified random sampling was used to select 225 final-year Business Education students. The composition of the sample was based on the proportion of the population from each institution. The only instrument used to gather data for this study is a researcher-designed 30-item closed-ended structured questionnaire developed from the literature review. It was tagged "Transversal Skills Needed for Entrepreneurial Development Questionnaire" (TSNEDQ). The instrument was divided into two sections—Section A deals with the respondents' demographic data. Section B contains three clusters, each with 10 items. The clusters or sub-sections of section B contained items or sentences that are based on the research questions. Section B of the instrument was structured on a 4-point rating scale. The instrument was

validated by three experts in Business Education from the Department of Business Education at the Federal College of Education (Oyo). The three experts were given draft copies of the instrument for thorough scrutiny, with reference to the face and content appropriateness and the suitability of the items, wording, and content coverage. The experts' contributions were incorporated into the final copies of the research instrument. The researchers conducted a pilot study to assess the instrument's reliability. The pilot study took place at the University of Lagos, Nigeria. The university was chosen for the pilot study because it is outside the study area but possesses similar characteristics to the study institutions. Cronbach's Alpha formula was used to obtain a reliability coefficient of 0.82. This aligns with Koul's (2021) position that coefficient reliability has a maximum value of 1.00, and the closer a coefficient is to that value, the more reliable the instrument. Copies of the research instrument were personally administered to respondents by the researchers. The research team visited the various campuses and, after a formal introduction, assured the respondents that their responses would be treated with utmost confidentiality. All ethical considerations were taken into account during the administration of the instrument. The data collected from the respondents in response to research questions 1-3 were analysed using weighted mean and standard deviation. The following boundary limits were used for the items in the questionnaire.

| Response Category | Points | Boundary limits |
|------------------------|--------|-----------------|
| Strongly Agree (SA) | 4 | 3.25-4.00 |
| Agree(A) | 3 | 2.50-3.24 |
| Disagree (D) | 2 | 1.75-2.49 |
| Strongly Disagree (SD) | 1 | 1.00-1.74 |

A decision rule of 2.50 was adopted for the research questions. By application, any item with a mean score equal to or greater than 2.50 was considered "agree" while any item with a score less than 2.50 was considered "disagree".

Results

Research Question One: What are the transversal skills needed for entrepreneurial development of business education students in tertiary institutions?

Table 2: Responses on transversal skills needed for entrepreneurial development of business education students in tertiary institutions.

| Soft Skills | Mean | SD | Remarks |
|---|------|------|----------------|
| Communication skills | 3.25 | 3.25 | Strongly Agree |
| Leadership skills | 3.09 | 0.83 | Agree |
| Team-building skills | 3.37 | 0.79 | Strongly Agree |
| Problem-solving skills | 3.35 | 0.78 | Strongly Agree |
| Time management skills | 3.36 | 0.75 | Strongly Agree |
| Strategic planning skills | 3.06 | 0.85 | Agree |
| Analytical skills | 3.03 | 0.77 | Agree |
| Delegation skills | 3.30 | 0.81 | Agree |
| Negotiation skills | 2.79 | 0.87 | Agree |
| Networking skills | 3.01 | 0.85 | Agree |
| N=255, Weighted mean/ Standard Deviation=3.14/0.80/ | | | Agree |

Source: Researchers' field survey (2025)

The result in Table 2 indicated that respondents agreed that all the items are essential transversal skills needed for entrepreneurial development of business education students in tertiary institutions. Their position is based on the weighted mean of 3.14, and the weighted standard deviation of 0.80 implies that the responses are clustered around the mean.

Research Question Two: What are the challenges of acquiring transversal skills by business education students in tertiary institutions?

Table 3: Responses to challenges of acquiring transversal skills by business education students in tertiary institutions

| Challenges | Mean | SD | Remark |
|---|------|------|----------------|
| Government failure to provide an enabling environment | 3.15 | 0.64 | Agree |
| Insatiable craze for quick wealth | 3.12 | 0.81 | Agree |
| Moral decadence in society | 3.18 | 0.83 | Agree |
| Dearth of positive role models | 3.28 | 0.70 | Strongly Agree |
| Poor reward system in society | 3.16 | 0.62 | Agree |
| Incompetency of instruction | 3.13 | 0.85 | Agree |
| Widespread corruption | 3.10 | 0.79 | Agree |
| Covetousness and greed | 3.08 | 0.87 | Agree |
| Indolence | 3.20 | 0.78 | Agree |
| Poor mental health | 3.27 | 0.77 | Strongly Agree |

N=225, Weighted Mean/ Standard Deviation=3.17/ 0.83/ Agree

Source: Researchers' field survey (2025).

With a weighted mean of 3.17, the results in Table 3 showed that respondents agreed that all the items are challenges of acquiring transversal skills by business education students in tertiary institutions. The weighted standard deviation implied that the responses are homogeneous.

Research Question Three: What are the strategies for inculcating transversal skills in business education students in tertiary institutions?

Table 4: Responses on strategies for inculcating transversal skills in business education students in tertiary institutions.

| Strategies | Mean | SD | Remarks |
|--|-------|------|---------|
| Inclusion of robotics and programming in the class | 3.01 | 0.83 | Agree |
| Encouraging students' autonomy as entrepreneurs | 3.06 | 0.84 | Agree |
| Helping students to develop transversal skills | 2.96 | 0.85 | Agree |
| Formation of business clubs on campus | 2.88 | 0.71 | Agree |
| Class discussion on soft skills | 2.83 | 0.72 | Agree |
| Field trips to business organizations | 3.03 | 0.83 | Agree |
| Organising work experience programs for students | 3.08 | 0.66 | Agree |
| Involvement of students in business project planning | 32.98 | 0.81 | Agree |

| | | | |
|--|-------------|-------------|--------------|
| Adoption of experiential learning by business education students | 3.15 | 0.65 | Agree |
| Encouraging business education students to think positively | 3.13 | 0.78 | Agree |
| N=2.55, weighted mean/standard deviation | 3.10 | 0.96 | Agree |

Source: Researchers' field survey (2025).

With a weighted mean of 3.10, Table 4 revealed that the majority of the respondents unanimously agreed that all the items are strategies for inculcating transversal skills in business education students for entrepreneurial development. The weighted standard deviation of 0.78 indicates the responses are homogeneous.

Discussion of Findings

This study assessed the soft skills needed for the entrepreneurial development of business education students in tertiary institutions in Ogun State. The findings of the study, based on the first research question and Table 2, revealed that communication, leadership, team-building, time management, and analytical skills are essential soft skills for the entrepreneurial development of business education students in tertiary institutions in Ogun State. The findings support those of Atah et al. (2022) and Alqatawenh and Al-samet (2021) that skills such as leadership, communication, negotiation, networking, and a host of others are highly essential for the success of an entrepreneurial venture.

Based on research question 2 and Table 3, the study found that government failure to provide an enabling environment, incompetent instruction, moral decadence, indolence, covetousness, and greed are among the challenges to the acquisition of soft skills by business education students in tertiary institutions. The findings buttress those of Tombari (2016) and Kulo and Agbojo (2016) that the collapse of societal values, widespread corruption at all levels, greed, a poor reward system, and the incompetence of instructors are among the challenges to the acquisition of soft skills by business education students.

Research question three enquired about strategies for inculcating soft skills in business education students. The results in Table 4 indicated that the formation of business clubs on campus, field trips to business organisations, encouraging business education students to think positively, and the inclusion of robotics and programming in the curriculum are some strategies for inculcating soft skills in business education students in tertiary institutions in Ogun State. The findings support Nwabuo's (2016) finding that enhancing students' autonomy as entrepreneurs, fostering positive interactions between business education students and employers of labour/community leaders, and helping students acquire transversal skills are among the strategies for inculcating soft skills for the entrepreneurial development of business education students. In a similar vein, Utoware and Eneogwe (2016) reported that strategies for inculcating soft skills for entrepreneurship can be classified into teacher-related and student-oriented strategies. From the foregoing, it is empirically evident that transversal skills are highly essential in the entrepreneurial development of business education students in tertiary institutions.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it was concluded that transversal skills, such as leadership, communication, negotiation, networking, problem-solving, team-building, and time management, are essential to the entrepreneurial development of students in business education. It was also concluded that moral decadence, indolence, and government failure to provide an enabling environment are among the challenges to the acquisition of transversal skills by business education students. Lastly, it was concluded that the formation of business clubs on campus, enhancing students' autonomy in business projects, and interaction between business education students and successful entrepreneurs are among the strategies for inculcating transversal skills in business education students in tertiary institutions in Ogun State. This implies that transversal skills should be significant components of the entrepreneurship education curriculum for business education students, as they are indispensable to the success and growth of business enterprises.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Transversal skills should be included in the curriculum for entrepreneurship education in tertiary institutions offering the Business Education Programme.
2. Business educators should ensure that Business Education students are exposed to real-life training for the inclusion of transversal skills for entrepreneurial development.
3. There should be greater emphasis on experiential learning by Business education students in the implementation of entrepreneurial development programmes.

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