



SKILL ACQUISITION LEVELS OF UNDERGRADUATES IN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES IN OGUN STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

Despite increased enrollment in higher education, many graduates still lack the practical skills, problem-solving abilities, technological competency, and entrepreneurial capacity required by the contemporary labour market a gap that that prioritise theoretical knowledge over practical application. This study examined the level of skill acquisition among undergraduates in public universities in Ogun State, Nigeria. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The population comprised 59,312 undergraduates from public universities in Ogun State with a sample of 1,190 undergraduate using proportionate stratified sampling technique. Data were collected using the Skill Acquisition Questionnaire (SAQ) with reliability coefficient $\alpha = .912$. Findings revealed that undergraduate students possess; a high level of technical skill ($\bar{X} = 3.09$), a high level of business management skill ($\bar{X} = 3.16$), a high level of soft skill ($\bar{X} = 3.17$), a high level of experiential learning skill ($\bar{X} = 3.21$), and a high level of continuous learning skill ($\bar{X} = 3.12$). It was concluded that undergraduates possess strong skill readiness, though gaps remain in industry-standard softwares and internship exposure. The study recommended among others that universities should strengthen structured technical skill development programme through industry partnership.

Keywords:

Skill acquisition, human capital, graduate employability, university-industry partnership, higher education.

Introduction

Graduate unemployment remains a pressing socioeconomic challenge in Nigeria with a growing mismatch between university training and labour market demands. However, the level of youth unemployment is alarmingly due to the mindset of students



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who graduate with intention of becoming job seekers rather than job creators. The Nigerian economy increasingly requires graduates who possess not only academic knowledge but also relevant practical, technical and entrepreneurial skills to function effectively in a competitive environment. As a result, skill acquisition has become a critical policy focus aimed at equipping undergraduates with employability competencies in Nigeria.

Odumade and Imoh (2025) noted that the issue of what to produce (individuals who will efficiently contribute to economic growth), how to produce (creating an economic growth mindset in individuals), and for whom to produce (developing nations) in the educational system has been a great concern for nations. Skill acquisition is an intervention mechanism in the eradication of unemployment and poverty in the society (Okeleke, 2019). Skills training could help the youths to be self-employed or be relevant in the world of work, thereby preventing poverty and providing for them a more fulfilled life. Hence, the ability to learn a skill which could be seen as intellectual such as learning to listen, speak, read and write or manual such as learning to build, or make something can be regarded as skill acquisition.

According to Obisanya et al. (2022), skill is the capacity of a person to accomplish a task with desired precision and certainty which involves practical knowledge combined with clarity, expertise, dexterity and the ability to perform a function which can be acquired or learned in schools or training centers through learning experiences. Skill acquisition encompasses several factors; technical skills, such as those developed through workplace learning and formal training, enhance productivity and efficiency, with significant spill-over effects in high-skilled settings (de Grip, 2023). Business management skills are crucial for entrepreneurship development, providing essential abilities, skills, and motivation to learners, which in turn promotes economic growth and reduces unemployment (Razak et al., 2022).

However, Soft skills often developed through experiential learning and continuous practice, are fundamental for effective communication, problem-solving, and leadership (DeKeyser, 2020). Experiential learning, which includes learning-by-doing and learning from peers, significantly contributes to skill acquisition and employee productivity (de Grip, 2023). Continuous learning, exemplified by programs such as the Online Advanced Skill Acquisition Program, ensures that individuals remain updated with evolving skills and knowledge, fostering lifelong employability and adaptability (Usman & Sanila, 2023). The study concluded that skill acquisition is a viable strategy for addressing joblessness and economic stagnation.

A study by Odumade and Imoh (2025) investigated financial literacy and skill acquisition as predictors of entrepreneurship intention among undergraduates in public universities in Ogun State. It was revealed that students who possess higher skill levels are more likely to pursue entrepreneurial venture. Similarly, Okafor et al. (2023) investigated the level of entrepreneurial skills acquired by undergraduates in public universities in Imo State of Nigeria. It was revealed that undergraduates possessed skills in business communication, creativity, problem-solving and financial management with low level competency in business planning, risk-taking and people management. Abbas and Osunsan (2020) examined the influence of entrepreneurship skills on the entrepreneurial intentions of graduating students from selected universities in

Northwestern Nigeria. The findings revealed that personal skills had a significant effect on entrepreneurial intent, as did technical skills and business management skills.

This study is anchored on the Human Capital Theory by Becker (1964), which posits that individuals acquire knowledge, skills, competencies and experiences through education and training to improve their productive capacity and economic value. The theory asserts that investments in education and skill development yield returns in the form of increased employability, productivity, innovation and income generating ability. In the context of higher education, human capital theory highlights universities as critical institutions for developing the competencies necessary for participation in a dynamic labour market. Skill acquisition through practical learning, internships, vocational training, digital competencies and problem-solving experiences is viewed as a strategic investment that prepares individuals for work and entrepreneurship ventures.

Statement of the Problem

The Nigerian labour market continues to experience a widening gap between the skills demanded by employers and the competencies possessed by university graduates. Despite increased enrollment in higher education and government efforts to expand access to quality learning, graduate unemployment and underemployment remain persistent challenges. However, Tai Solarin Federal University of Education (TASFUED) have made commendable efforts by introducing a Centre for Entrepreneurship and Vocational Studies (CENVOS) to promote entrepreneurial learning. But many students still graduate without sufficient practical skills, problem solving abilities, technological competency and entrepreneurial capacity necessary for effective workplace performance or self-employment initiatives. It is largely due to curriculum limitations that prioritize theoretical knowledge over practical application. This misalignment raises critical concerns about the capacity of Nigerian universities to produce graduates who are adequately prepared for the dynamic demands of the contemporary economy. Therefore, this study examined the level of skill acquisition among undergraduates in public universities in Ogun State, Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

This study examined the level of skill acquisition among undergraduates in public universities in Ogun State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study examined:

1. the level of technical skill acquired by undergraduates in public universities in Ogun State, Nigeria;
2. the level of business management skill acquired by undergraduates in public universities in Ogun State, Nigeria;
3. the level of soft skill acquired by undergraduates in public universities in Ogun State, Nigeria;
4. the level of experiential learning skill acquired by undergraduates in public universities in Ogun State, Nigeria.
5. the level of continuous learning skill acquired by undergraduates in public universities in Ogun State, Nigeria.

Research Questions

1. What is the level of technical skill acquired by undergraduates in public universities in Ogun State, Nigeria?
2. What is the level of business management skill acquired by undergraduates in public universities in Ogun State, Nigeria?
3. What is the level of soft skill acquired by undergraduates in public universities in Ogun State, Nigeria?
4. What is the level of experiential learning skill acquired by undergraduates in public universities in Ogun State, Nigeria?
5. What is the level of continuous learning skill acquired by undergraduates in public universities in Ogun State, Nigeria?

Methodology

A descriptive survey research design was adopted in this study. The population comprised all the 59,312 undergraduates in public universities in Ogun State; Tai Solarin Federal University of Education, Ijagun (TASFUED) and Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye (OOU). A sample of 1,190 undergraduates was used. The sample size was calculated to achieve a precision of approximately $\pm 2.9\%$: using Yamane's formula $n = N/(1 + Ne^2)$ the reported sample corresponds to $e \approx 0.0287$ ($\approx 2.87\%$). A proportionate stratified sampling technique was used. Data were collected using the Skill Acquisition Questionnaire (SAQ) adapted from Darce and Sewell (2007) and Yorke and Night (2004) with reliability coefficient $\alpha = .912$, indicating strong internal consistency. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics of frequency count, mean, and standard deviation.

Result

Research Question One: What is the level of technical skill acquired by undergraduates in public universities in Ogun State, Nigeria?

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics of Technical Skill Acquired

Items	Response (%)					\bar{X}	SD	Remarks
	SD	D	A	SA				
I participate in workshops to learn new skills.	3.1	12.8	63.2	20.9	3.02	.680	High	
I seek hands-on experience in my field of study.	1.1	5.2	66.5	27.2	3.20	.573	High	
I have practical experience through internships.	3.0	21.2	52.5	23.3	2.96	.752	High	
I apply theoretical knowledge to practical situations.	1.4	7.2	64.3	27.2	3.17	.607	High	
Grand Mean = 3.09								

Note: $\bar{X} < 2.5$ is low, while $\bar{X} > 2.5$ high

Table 1 presents the level of technical skill acquired by undergraduates in public universities in Ogun State. The findings reveal that students possess a high level of technical skill ($\bar{X} = 3.09$), as these suggest that students are not only exposed to skill-

building opportunities but are also proactively utilizing them to strengthen their technical competence.

Research Question Two: What is the level of business management skill acquired by undergraduates in public universities in Ogun State, Nigeria?

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics of Business Management Skill Acquired

Items	Response (%)				\bar{X}	SD	Remarks
	SD	D	A	SA			
I work well independently and in teams.	2.0	5.2	67.2	25.5	3.16	.603	High
I manage my time effectively.	1.1	4.9	68.3	25.7	3.19	.562	High
I set personal goals for skill development.	1.9	5.8	67.3	25.0	3.15	.602	High
I have developed leadership skills.	1.8	7.6	64.1	26.5	3.15	.624	High
Grand Mean = 3.16							

Note: $\bar{X} < 2.5$ is low, while $\bar{X} > 2.5$ high

Table 2 presents the level of business management skill acquired by undergraduates in public universities in Ogun State. The findings reveal that respondents reported a high level of business management skill ($\bar{X} = 3.16$), as these suggest that students not only possess foundational management abilities but also the behavioural and organizational skills required for successful business practice and entrepreneurial pursuits.

Research Question Three: What is the level of soft skill acquired by undergraduates in public universities in Ogun State, Nigeria?

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics of Soft Skill Acquired

Items	Response (%)				\bar{X}	SD	Remarks
	SD	D	A	SA			
I seek feedback to improve my skills.	1.7	3.0	64.9	30.5	3.24	.587	High
I have strong problem-solving skills.	2.5	17.2	56.0	24.4	3.02	.717	High
I communicate effectively in writing and speaking.	1.4	5.1	64.6	29.0	3.21	.592	High
I seek mentorship from professionals.	1.6	4.9	64.6	28.8	3.21	.599	High
Grand Mean = 3.17							

Note: $\bar{X} < 2.5$ is low, while $\bar{X} > 2.5$ high

Table 3 presents the level of soft skill acquired by undergraduates in public universities in Ogun State. The findings revealed that respondents reported a high level of soft skill ($\bar{X} = 3.17$), as these suggest that students are increasingly conscious of the importance of interpersonal, communication, and personal development skills for career success.

Research Question Four: What is the level of experiential learning skill acquired by undergraduates in public universities in Ogun State, Nigeria?

Table 4*Descriptive Statistics of Experiential Learning Skill Acquired*

Items	Response (%)				\bar{X}	SD	Remarks
	SD	D	A	SA			
I learn from both successes and failures.	1.2	3.9	62.9	32.0	3.26	.583	High
I engage in activities that enhance my skills.	1.4	3.4	66.7	28.5	3.22	.572	High
I use online resources for self-directed learning.	2.5	6.3	64.6	26.7	3.16	.636	High
Grand Mean = 3.21							

Note: $\bar{X} < 2.5$ is low, while $\bar{X} > 2.5$ high

Table 4 presents the level of experiential learning skill acquired by undergraduates in public universities in Ogun State. The findings reveal that respondents reported a high level of experiential learning skill ($\bar{X} = 3.21$), as these suggest that students are developing attributes associated with experiential learning such as reflection, active experimentation, and independent learning.

Research Question Five: What is the level of continuous learning skill acquired by undergraduates in public universities in Ogun State, Nigeria?

Table 5*Descriptive Statistics of Continuous Learning Skill Acquired*

Items	Response (%)				\bar{X}	SD	Remarks
	SD	D	A	SA			
I am confident in learning new skills quickly.	1.7	3.6	65.4	29.4	3.22	.589	High
I am proficient in using relevant technology.	1.5	8.2	66.6	23.7	3.12	.604	High
I am skilled in industry-standard software.	2.5	19.7	56.5	21.2	2.96	.714	High
I regularly review my skills for improvement.	1.9	6.8	62.9	28.5	3.18	.629	High
Grand Mean = 3.12							

Note: $\bar{X} < 2.5$ is low, while $\bar{X} > 2.5$ high

Table 5 presents the level of continuous learning skill acquired by undergraduates in public universities in Ogun State. The findings reveal that respondents reported a high level of continuous learning skill ($\bar{X} = 3.12$), as these suggest that students possess strong learning agility and adaptability key attributes necessary for navigating dynamic academic and professional environments.

Discussion of Findings

Research question one revealed that students possess a high level of technical skill, which implies a growing awareness among undergraduates of the importance of technical skills for employability, aligning with national calls for a more skill-driven workforce. These corroborates Elee (2023) who found that students in Anambra State,

Nigeria show high technical competence in material and application, but low in equipment maintenance and workshop management. Research question two revealed that students possess a high level of business management skill, which implies that the learning environment in these universities foster self-management, leadership development, and teamwork competencies that align with the demands of the contemporary labour market. These agrees with Aina et al. (2020) who revealed that students of business education possessed communication, financial management, and failure management skills that were highly needed to be an entrepreneur and depend on self-reliance.

Research question three revealed that students possess a high level of soft skill, which implies that the university environment is encouraging students to develop essential soft skills that complement technical and managerial competencies thereby enhancing holistic employability. These aligns with Akeke (2022) who found that business education students had high degree of communication and interpersonal skills, which became a reality through the interactive mode of teaching as well as exposure to team work projects. Research question four revealed that students possess a high level of experiential learning skill, which implies that undergraduates are not only open to continuous learning but are also taking responsibility for their personal and professional development. This agrees with Aina et al. (2020) who established that undergraduates were very competent in experiential areas, especially in applying the classroom knowledge to entrepreneurial business. Research question five revealed that students possess a high level of continuous learning skill, which implies that undergraduates are actively embracing lifelong learning especially in technology driven areas. Oguntimehin and Olaniran (2017) revealed that exposure to entrepreneurship education significantly influences students' intentions to engage in entrepreneurial activities, suggesting that such educational programs effectively promote skill acquisition among undergraduates.

Conclusion

The study examined the level of skill acquisition among undergraduates in public universities in Ogun State. However, undergraduates possess a high level of skill acquisition in technical skill, business management skill, soft skill, experiential learning skill, and continuous learning skill by demonstrating readiness for labour market and entrepreneurial ventures consistent with human capital theory. Thus, gaps exist in industry-standard software proficiency and practical internship exposure, indicating the need for strengthened industry partnerships and enhanced experiential learning opportunities.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made that:

1. Universities strengthen and expand structured technical skill development programme by establishing stronger partnership with industries, vocational centers and private organizations;
2. Universities strengthen formal training in business management skills by integrating more structured leadership development programme, entrepreneurship workshop, collaborative project-based learning into the curriculum;

3. Universities introduce more structured soft skill development programmes such as problem-solving workshops, peer-mentoring schemes, communication clinics, and professional development seminars;
4. Universities expand experiential learning opportunities by integrating more fieldwork, internships, communication-based projects, laboratory sessions, and simulation exercises into the curriculum;
5. Institutions should collaborate with industry partners to offer hands-on training and software licensing opportunities.

Contribution to Knowledge

This study makes several contributions to knowledge in the fields of higher education, skill development, and graduate employability in Nigeria:

1. This study advances knowledge by simultaneously measuring five distinct skill dimensions technical, business management, soft, experiential learning, and continuous learning through a validated instrument (SAQ, $\alpha = .912$) adapted from internationally recognised frameworks (Dacre Pool & Sewell, 2007; Yorke & Knight, 2004). This multidimensional approach provides a more complete and practically useful picture of undergraduate skill readiness than any prior study in the Ogun State context.
2. This study contributes evidence that Nigerian undergraduates are autonomous skill agents whose capacity for self-directed, experiential learning may outpace what formal curricula deliver. This nuances existing theory and has implications for how higher education institutions in developing economies should conceptualise their role in human capital development.
3. This study makes a precise and policy-relevant contribution by identifying industry-standard software proficiency ($\bar{X} = 2.96$) and internship exposure ($\bar{X} = 2.96$) as the two lowest-scoring items across all five dimensions. Rather than reporting a generalised skills deficit as much of the Nigerian employability literature does this study pinpoints the exact fault lines. This precision is valuable for curriculum designers, institutional policymakers, and industry partners who require targeted rather than broad intervention rationales.

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