

**BUSINESS EDUCATION STUDENTS' PERCEPTION OF GENERIC SKILLS DEVELOPMENT
IN A HETEROGENEOUS CLASSROOM IN NORTHERN NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES**

BY

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Abstract

This study examines the Business Education Students' perception of generic skills development in a heterogeneous classroom in northern Nigerian Universities. The study was guided by 4 objectives, 4 research questions, and 4 hypotheses. A survey design was adopted for the study. The target population was 233 final-year Business Education Students. A questionnaire was used for data collection. Three experts validated the questionnaire. The Cronbach alpha reliability of the instrument was >0.7. The data collected were analyzed using mean scores to answer the research questions and ANOVA was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. It was recommended that; there is a need for lecturers to design ways of incorporating the component generic skills into their teaching method and learning strategies

Keywords: Business Education, Generic Skills, Perceptions, Heterogeneous

Introduction

Business Education on its own is an aspect of educational process, which provides an individual with the pedagogical and business competences necessary for the teaching and practicing of business concepts, knowledge, attitudes and skills for personal use, for entry into business world as employer or employee and for participation as a business teacher. Umoru and Oluwalola (2016) stated that Business Education is intended to provide the learners both intellectual and occupational skills. These skills are intended to make them function effectively, not only as employees but also as self-reliant persons and wealth creators. The quality of the development of any country depends on the development of its human and material resources. According to Udo (2016) business education is an aspect of learning that prepares individuals for roles in business and offers them knowledge about business. Business education is a component of vocational technical education programme that prepares an individual for career in business and to be an intelligent consumer of economic goods and services (Utoware and KrenIkidi 2014). Business education provides students with the needed competencies, skills, knowledge, understanding and attitude to perform as workers in industries, civil service and as proprietors of businesses.

Generic skills (GS) enable us to generate new skills that help us succeed in new situations manage and adapt to changes and to flourish by creating what matters even in the face of diversity. In the competitive world of today, life is getting complex day by day Keneley, and Jackling (2011). Basic skills empower an individual to create innovative services that help to prosper in different circumstances. A generic skill is one which can be applied across the variety of subject domains and require longer acquiring than their dependent skills (subject area). These skills once acquired remains with the individual throughout his life and help him to succeed not only in studies but in career and life also generic skills are high order, transferable skills that are common to almost all complex endeavours. They include skills such as communicating; problem solving, curiosity, patience, flexibility, purpose, persistence, patience, courage and creating that apply too across all specific fields. Soft skills or more commonly known as (SS), became an essential element in the national education policy with regard to attaining a global standard. Generic Skills (GS) are transferable skills that help individual to succeed in new situations, manage and adapt to

changes in the world of work. Okolacha, Ukor and Lucky (2017) asserted that generic skills (GS) consist of fundamental skills, people related skills, personal skills, thinking skills, business related skills, and community related skills. Furthermore, Gurbalshin, (2018) identified the following types of generic skills; communication skills (CS), team work (TW), adaptability (AD), and self-esteem (SE). Intelligence is the ability to think, to learn from experience, to solve problems and to adapt to new situation. Various terms are used interchangeably in the literature to describe such skills, such as; employability skills, generic/core skills, soft skills, traits, values, competencies and qualities, these help you to develop ability to work independently, establishing good rapport with subordinates, empathizing with others, and writing external business communication.

Statement of the Problem

There is an increasing pressure from the industry, Government and other stakeholders that higher institutions are not producing graduates with versatile generic skills. Higher institutions offering undergraduate programs are not producing graduates with the kind of lifelong skills and practical skills that they needed in order to be successful in their choosing careers (Rufaida 2019). Mohammed et al (2019) asserted that Institutions are graduating students with high grades but lack the fundamental skills, and therefore quarrel with complex and numerous issues involving; personal and interpersonal skills, leadership and supervisory skills, conflict resolution, diversity and communication skills in workplaces. Business Education students in higher institutions give less emphasis on employability skills (soft skills) they only focused and place more emphasis on practical courses. The curriculum content of business education does not stress or encompass these soft skills; as a result, students were unprepared for the challenges and the realities of employment (Okolacha, Ukor, and Lucky 2017). Employers who operate in the labour markets now seek employees who possess not only high-level technical or job specific skills (hard skills), but also high levels of what are known as generic skills. The poor perception or the deficiency of such skills is causing complications for the graduates to secure a job upon graduation and therefore remain unemployed. For business education Students to compete favorably and to succeed in their future job, the necessity for skills development should be encouraged to students.

Research Questions

The following research questions will guide the study:

1. What is the Business education students' perception of self-awareness skills in a heterogeneous classroom among their options of study (ACCT, OTM and MGT) in Northern Nigerian Universities?
2. What is the Business education students' perception of Communication skills in a heterogeneous classroom among their options of study in Northern Nigerian Universities?
3. What is the Business education students' perception of self-esteem skills in a heterogeneous classroom among their options of study in Northern Nigerian Universities?
4. What is the Business education students' perception of adaptability skills in a heterogeneous classroom among their options of study in Northern Nigerian Universities?

Hypotheses

H₀₁: There is no significant difference among the mean responses of Business education students' perception of self-awareness skills on the basis of their options of study in a heterogeneous classroom in Northern Nigerian Universities.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference among the mean response responses of Business education students' perception of communication skills on the basis of their options of study in a heterogeneous classroom in Northern Nigerian Universities.

H₀₃: There is no significant difference among the mean responses of Business education students' perception of self-esteem skills on the basis of their options of study in a heterogeneous classroom in Northern Nigerian Universities.

H₀₄: There is no significant difference among the mean responses of Business education students' perception of adaptability skills on the basis of their options of study in a heterogeneous classroom in Northern Nigerian Universities.

Methodology

Descriptive research design was adopted for the study; the area of the study was Northern region of Nigeria comprised of 5 universities offering business education in three options. The population of the

study was 233 final year undergraduates Business education students in 2020/2021 academic session, the Total Population Simple (TPS) was adopted: An instrument titled: Business Education students Perception Self-assessment Questionnaire” (BESPSQ) was use for data collection. The instrument for data collection was given to three lecturers in Business Education of Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University Bauchi for faces and contents validation. In order to establish the internal consistency or stability of the measuring instrument, the questionnaire will be subjected to Cronbach Alpha method of reliability test. The result of the reliability test of all constructs/variables revealed the Cronbach alpha coefficients of greater than 0.70 this is recommended as acceptable level (Sambo, 2008; George & Mallery, 2003). The data to be collected was analysed using the mean and standard deviation with the help of Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (IBM SPSS) version 26.0

Results

Research Question 1: What is the Business education students’ perception of self-awareness skills in a heterogeneous classroom among their options of study (ACCT, OTM and MGT) in Northern Nigerian Universities?

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Self-awareness skills **mean scores**

N	Items	X _{ACCT}	X _{OTM}	X _{MGT}	X _y	SD	Remark
1	self-awareness skills enable students to recognise their own feelings and how it affects their performance.	3.66	3.31	3.25	3.58	0.502	Agreed
2	self-awareness skills makes the students to know the type of reactions they are feeling and why	3.42	3.23	3.25	3.45	0.564	Agreed
3	self-awareness skills allow the students to take sound decisions despite uncertainty and pressures	3.08	2.62	3.25	3.09	0.678	Agreed
4	with self-awareness skills, student present himself with self-confidence.	3.50	3.08	3.25	3.45	0.564	Agreed
5	self-awareness skills help the student to be aware of his strength and weaknesses	3.58	3.31	3.24	3.52	0.566	Agreed
6	self-awareness skills, enable the student in carrying out related tasks in his choosing career	3.50	3.15	3.38	3.42	0.792	Agreed
7	self-awareness skills, help the students to be dedicated and develop self-possession	3.33	2.85	3.25	3.28	0.634	Agreed
8	with self-awareness skills, students have self-assessment	3.25	3.31	3.24	3.30	0.651	Agreed
9	self-awareness skills help students to be philosophical and ready to learn from experience	3.25	2.69	3.13	3.03	0.770	Agreed
10	self-awareness skills make the students to be creative/innovative in work-related ideas	3.58	2.85	3.38	3.27	.674	Agreed
Grand mean		3.44	3.06	3.28	3.30	.327	Agreed

Source: Field Survey, 2021

Mean scores: Accounting; X_{ACCT}, OTM; X_{OTM}, MGT; X_{MG}, and Weighted Mean; X_y

The output of descriptive statistics presented in Table 1 indicates that all mean scores of respondents (Business education students) on their perception of self-awareness skills are above 3.00. Hence, the mean scores of students’ perception on self-awareness skills items are ranging from 3.03 to 3.58 with grand mean of 3.30, which is also above 3.00. The result indicates that, Business Education Students had a positive perception on self-awareness skills.

Research Question 2: What is the Business education students’ perception of Communication skills in a heterogeneous classroom among their options of study in Northern Nigerian Universities?

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Communication skills

N	Items	mean scores				SD	Remark
		X _{ACCT}	X _{OTM}	X _{MGT}	X _Y		
1	with communication skills students have the ability to communicate effectively both orally and through written words in the main language	3.42	3.69	3.75	3.64	.489	Agreed
2	communication skills, enable the student to interact with colleagues and speak fluently	3.67	3.46	3.75	3.64	.489	Agreed
3	with communication skills, students can write convincing letters	3.33	2.77	3.25	3.21	.600	Agreed
4	with communication skills, students have the ability to communicate with non-experts in his field	2.92	3.46	2.86	3.00	.829	Agreed
5	with communication skills. student have the ability to communicate in a another language	2.50	3.69	2.50	3.46	.859	Agreed
6	communication skills enable the student to communicate information using mathematical ideas and techniques	2.33	2.46	2.50	3.07	.899	Agreed
7	Communication skills help the students to harmonize relationship with others	2.83	2.85	3.25	3.15	.755	Agreed
8	Communication skills enhance students use of appropriate words	3.67	3.31	3.00	3.50	.508	Agreed
9	with communication skills students have acquire the necessary skills that enable him to make use of ICT effectively	2.42	2.69	3.38	3.01	.876	Agreed
10	communication skills enable student to arrange the communication pattern in logical manner	3.33	2.85	3.25	3.12	.696	Agreed
Grand Mean		3.06	3.03	3.15	3.10	.328	Agreed

The output of descriptive statistics presented in Table 2 indicates that all mean scores of respondents (Business education students) on communication skills are above 3.00. Hence, the mean scores of students' perception on Communication skills items are ranging from 3.00 to 3.64 with grand mean of 3.10, which is also above 3.00. The result indicates that, Business Education Students had a positive perception on Communication skills.

Research Question 3: What is the Business education students' perception of self-esteem skills in a heterogeneous classroom among their options of study in Northern Nigerian Universities?

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics of Self-esteem skills

N	Items	mean scores				SD	Remark
		X _{ACCT}	X _{OTM}	X _{MGT}	X _Y		
1	self-esteem skills, enable students to learn and stay up-to-date with learning	3.17	2.92	3.25	3.09	0.805	Agreed
2	with self-esteem skills, students have the ability to be self-regard and modest	3.00	3.38	3.50	3.15	0.795	Agreed
3	with self-esteem skills, students have the ability to search for information	2.91	3.00	3.13	3.03	0.810	Agreed
4	with self-esteem skills, student have develop the ability for awareness	3.00	3.15	3.13	3.09	0.631	Agreed
5	with self-esteem skills, students can make good plan and manage time judiciously	2.92	3.15	3.50	3.18	0.846	Agreed
6	with self-esteem skills, students can design and manage projects	3.00	2.92	3.00	3.04	0.704	Agreed
7	Self-esteem skills allow the students to develop ability to deal with pressure	3.25	3.54	3.50	3.44	0.716	Agreed
8	with self-esteem skills, students can contribute to long term strategic planning	2.67	3.31	3.00	3.00	0.791	Agreed
9	with self-esteem skills students can have the ability to present himself flexibly in the world of work	3.08	3.46	3.50	3.39	0.659	Agreed

10	students have the ability to be self-determine, attribution and ready to face challenges	3.33	3.38	3.63	3.45	0.617	Agreed
Grand Mean		3.08	3.23	3.31	3.18	.394	Agreed

The output of descriptive statistics presented in Table 3 indicates that all mean scores of respondents on self-esteem skills are above 3.00. Hence, the mean scores of students' perception on self-esteem skills items are ranging from 3.00 to 3.64 with grand mean of 3.18, which is also above 3.00. The result indicates that, Business Education Students had a positive perception on self-esteem skills.

Research Question 4: What is the Business education students' perception of adaptability skills in a heterogeneous classroom among their options of study in Northern Nigerian Universities?

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics of Adaptability skills

N	Items	mean scores				SD	Remark
		X _{ACCT}	X _{OTM}	X _{MGT}	X _Y		
1	adaptability skills allows the students to stay composed and positive even in an annoying moment	3.12	3.31	3.13	3.21	0.600	Agreed
2	adaptability skills help the students to seek out new ideas from the internet	2.92	2.92	3.25	3.00	0.661	Agreed
3	with adaptability skills, students can manage his desire	3.25	3.00	3.00	3.21	0.600	Agreed
4	adaptability skills allow the students to be determine in his/her responsibilities assigned to him	3.00	3.23	3.50	3.35	0.551	Agreed
5	adaptability skills help the students to be up-to-date in the use of information and communication technology	3.08	3.23	2.88	3.09	0.856	Agreed
6	with adaptability skills students have acquired the necessary skills and ready to use it in his chosen career	2.58	3.08	3.13	2.97	0.782	Agreed
7	with adaptability skills, students is emotionally balance at workplace	3.33	2.77	3.00	3.03	0.810	Agreed
8	adaptability skills help the students to present himself with honesty in all his affairs	2.58	3.15	2.88	2.81	0.859	Agreed
9	adaptability skills allow the students to make personal sacrifice to meet a larger group goal	2.50	3.00	3.38	2.94	0.864	Agreed
10	adaptability skills allow the students to take different perceptions in thinking and decisions	3.33	3.38	2.75	3.15	0.667	Agreed
Grand Mean		3.00	3.13	3.09	3.08	.433	Agreed

The output of descriptive statistics presented in Table 4 indicates that all mean scores of respondents on adaptability skills are above 3.00. Hence, the mean scores of students' perception on adaptability skills items are ranging from 2.94 to 3.35 with grand mean of 3.08, which is also above 3.00. The result indicates that, Business Education Students had a positive view on adaptability skills.

H0₁: There is no significant difference among the mean responses of Business education students' perception of self-awareness skills on the basis of their options of study in a heterogeneous classroom in Northern Nigerian Universities.

Table 5: One-way analysis of variance for mean difference among Business education students’ perception of self-awareness skills on the basis of their options of study

Source of variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Decision
Between Groups	0.183	2	0.092	0.846	0.439	Retained
Within Groups	3.248	230	0.108			
Total	3.431	232				

Source: Field Survey, 2022

The result of analysis in table 5 indicates that statistically there was none existence of significant difference in the mean responses of students’ perception of self-awareness skills on the basis of their options of study in a heterogeneous classroom in Northern Nigerian Universities: $F(2, 30) = 0.108, p = 0.439$ Hence, Hypothesis 1 was supported.

Ho2: There is no significant difference among the mean response responses of Business education students’ perception of communication skills on the basis of their options of study in a heterogeneous classroom in Northern Nigerian Universities.

Table 6: One-way analysis of variance for mean difference among Business education students’ perception of communication skills on the basis of their options of study

Source of variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Decision
Between Groups	0.070	2	0.035	0.228	0.797	Retained
Within Groups	4.599	230	0.153			
Total	4.669	232				

Source: Field Survey, 2022

The result of analysis in table 6 indicates that statistically there was none existence of significant difference in the mean responses of students perception of communication skills on the basis of their options of study in a heterogeneous classroom in Northern Nigerian Universities: $F(2, 30) = 0.228, p = 0.797$ Hence, Hypothesis 2 was supported.

Ho3: There is no significant difference among the mean responses of Business education students’ perception of self-esteem skills on the basis of their options of study in a heterogeneous classroom in Northern Nigerian Universities.

Table 7: One-way analysis of variance for mean difference among Business education students’ perception of self-esteem skills on the basis of their options of study

Source of variation	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Decision
Between Groups	0.323	2	0.161	1.044	0.365	Rejected
Within Groups	4.638	230	0.155			
Total	4.961	232				

Source: Field Survey, 2022

The result of analysis in table 7 indicates that statistically there was none existence of significant difference in the mean responses of students perception of self-esteem skills on the basis of their options of study in a heterogeneous classroom in Northern Nigerian Universities: $F(2, 30) = 1.044, p = 0.365$ Hence, Hypothesis 3 was Rejected.

Ho4: There is no significant difference among the mean responses of Business education students’ perception of adaptability skills on the basis of their options of study in a heterogeneous classroom in Northern Nigerian Universities.

Table 8: One-way analysis of variance for mean difference among Business education students' perception of adaptability skills on the basis of their options of study

Source of Variation	Sum of squares	df	Mean squares	F	Sig	Decision
Between group	0.007	2	0.004	0.018	0.982	Retained
Within group	5.995	230	0.200			
Total	6.002	232				

Source: Field Survey, 2022

The result of analysis in table 8 indicates that statistically there was none existence of significant difference in the mean responses of students perception of adaptability skills on the basis of their options of study in a heterogeneous classroom in Northern Nigerian Universities: $F(2, 30) = 0.018, p = 0.982$ Hence, Hypothesis 4 was supported.

Discussions

Based on the analysis and summary of findings, the following discussions were made.

The findings of research question 1 to 4 and the test of its corresponding null hypotheses (1, 2, and 3) revealed that; Business Education Students (on the basis of their options of study: (Accounting education option, office technology and management education option, and management/distributive education option) had a positive perception on the employability skills. The results of analysis in the tables indicated that, statistically there was none existence of significant difference among the mean responses of students' perception on generic skills on the basis of their options of study in a heterogeneous classroom in Northern Nigerian Universities. Hence, this was supported by hypotheses 1, 2, and 4.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study it was concluded that;

The perception of Business education students based on their option of specialisation (Accounting education option, office technology and management education option, and management/distributive education option) on generic skills development in heterogeneous classroom in the northern Nigeria Universities is positive; there is no significance differences among the mean responses of business education students' perceptions based on their option of specialisation Accounting education option, office technology and management education option, and management/distributive education option) on generic skills development in a heterogeneous classroom in the northern Nigerian Universities

Recommendations

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

1. There is need for instructors, teachers and lecturers to design ways of incorporating the components of generic skills development into their teaching methods and techniques.
2. There should be more emphasis on practical work and real life situations than on theory.
3. Government should sensitize and mandate employers in the public and the private sector not to reject students and undergraduates sent to them for industrial training.
4. There should be functional career service units in all the institutions, and there should be a strong industry institutions relationship to enhance all the generic skills attributes.

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