

1
2 **IDENTIFYING OPTIMAL STRATEGIES FOR INTEGRATING EMERGING**
3 **EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS INTO BUSINESS EDUCATION PROGRAMME IN**
4 **UNIVERSITIES, IN SOUTH EAST UNIVERSITIES, NIGERIA**

5
6 **ABSTRACT**

7 This study was carried out to identify optimal strategies for integrating emerging employability
8 skills into business education programme. Two research questions and one null hypothesis guided
9 the study. The study adopted survey research design with a population of 144 business education
10 lecturers studied without sampling. The instrument for data collection is a-20 item self-developed
11 questionnaire titled “Identifying Optimal Strategies for Integrating Emerging Employability Skills
12 into Business Education Programme (AOSIEES-BEP)”. Face and content validity of the instrument
13 were ascertained using three experts, two from Business Education and one expert from
14 Measurement and Evaluation. The internal consistency of the instrument was established using
15 trial-test and data collected were calculated with Cronbach Alpha formula which yielded correlation
16 coefficients of .88 and .90 for clusters B1 to B2 with an overall value of .89. The researcher with the
17 help of four research assistants administered the instrument to the respondents in their offices. Out
18 of 144 copies of questionnaire distributed, 134(94%) were correctly filled and returned which was
19 used for data analysis. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions and
20 determine the homogeneity of the respondents’ mean ratings while t-test was used to test the null
21 hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. Findings revealed that business education lecturer agree
22 that majority of the optimal strategies listed in the study are implemented by business education
23 departments for integrate emerging employability skills into their programme in universities in
24 South East Nigeria, business education lecturers agree that factors listed hinder the implementation
25 of strategies for integrating emerging employability skills into business education programme in
26 South East Nigerian universities. It was also found that Ownership of institution did not influence
27 business education lecturers mean ratings in this regard. Based on the findings of the study, the
28 researcher concluded that business education departments in South East universities are not
29 implementing optimal strategies for integrating emerging employability skills into their programme.
30 It was recommended among others that; business education lecturers in Nigerian universities should
31 integrate industry-relevant case studies and projects in their teaching processes.

32
33 ***Key Words: Strategies, Integration, Emerging Employability Skills, Business Education***

34
35
36
37
38
39 **Introduction**

40
41 Presently, graduates from tertiary institutions are greatly expected to possess 21st century
42 skills in order to fit into the changing workplace,. The nature of today's work, which is changing in
43 light of technological advancements and changing societal demands, is reflected in the growing
44 demand for acquiring employability skills. It goes without saying that graduates must continuously
45 develop a variety of skills that align with the current demands of employers in order to thrive in

46 today's labour market. Because of this, universities that act as the hub for the development of
47 human capital must sufficiently equip their students with requisite skills that will enable them meet
48 with the demands of the modern job markets upon graduation. The university can be referred to as a
49 higher education where students study for degrees, and where academic research is carried out.
50 Universities prepare students for the workforce by equipping them relevant skills as noted by
51 Goetze (2019), and the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization
52 (UNESCO) (2019).

53 Universities in Nigeria lead the way in developing human capital. Universities nurture
54 talents of youths, support their creativity, and boost the nation's economy. The importance of
55 universities in Nigeria was affirmed when in her National Policy on Education; the Federal
56 Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 2014) stated that they offer citizens manpower training in skills. They
57 also offer undergraduate and graduate programmes in fields like Sciences, Social Sciences, and
58 Humanities. It is anticipated that the courses taught in Nigerian universities will give graduates the
59 skills they need to succeed in the workforce. Unfortunately, Akinyemi (2023) pointed out that
60 having a variety of university degrees and certificates is no longer a guarantee of employment in
61 Nigeria. According to Akinyemi, there is a rise in youth and graduate unemployment with
62 numerous graduates with excellent degrees wandering the streets looking for white-collar jobs,
63 which are essentially nonexistent.

64 It is essential to empower young individuals by offering them high-quality education to
65 develop pertinent skills. This will help to eliminate youth and graduate unemployment in Nigeria.
66 The Nigerian Federal Government sees business education as a solution to escalating youth and
67 graduate unemployment in the country (FRN, 2013). Business education as defined by Ejeka and
68 Mgbonyebi (2016) is a type of vocational education that equips youths with skills for gainful
69 employment or self-actualization. It aims to offer students skills they need on graduation to make a
70 major contribution to the development of Nigeria. According to Osinem and Nwoji (2020), business
71 education encompasses both office education and general education. Students who receive a general
72 business education are better prepared for business world and manage their own firms. Office
73 business education on the other hand prepares students for professions in offices by providing the
74 kind of education that promotes employability and career progression. Njoku (2016) noted that
75 business education prepares students for careers in teaching, accounting, office technology
76 positions, leadership, and entrepreneurship.

77 For business education students to gain employment after graduation, they must acquire
78 employability skills. Nwaukwa et al. (2018) and Babalola (2017) in agreement noted that the main
79 objective of business education programme is to produce graduates with employability skills which
80 include both hard and soft talents necessary for success in contemporary workplaces, as well as
81 characteristics that support job performance and adaptation. Employability skills improve graduates'
82 chances of finding job and have a beneficial impact on the labour market and economy (UK
83 Commission for Employment and Skills, 2010; Yorke, 2016).

84 Succeeding in the emerging office jobs requires graduates of Nigerian tertiary institutions to
85 possess 21st century skills. Attesting to this, the World Economic Forum (WEF, 2020) noted that
86 new technologies and changing labour markets are causing rapid shift in skills demanded of
87 graduates. Employability skills including digital literacy, data analysis, critical thinking, creativity,
88 flexibility, resilience, communication, emotional intelligence, and global awareness are some of the
89 important employability skills demands of modern workplaces. Today's workplace is not static but
90 flexible, and requires business education programme to consistently prepare students for the
91 twenty-first century. Lippman et al. (2015) asserted that graduates who gain emerging
92 employability skills are more likely to have higher hiring rates, employment success, and incomes.
93 The Graduate Management Admission Council (2021) noted that educational programmes that
94 integrate employability abilities in their curriculum stand a chance of increase graduates'
95 employability.

96 The integration of emerging employability skills can be seen as a conscious inclusion of
97 relevant skills required for success in an ever-changing labour market into business education
98 curriculum and learning experiences. Onojaife (2019) stated that business educators must identify
99 emerging skills and incorporate them into their students' learning experiences. However,
100 integrating these skills into the programme's curriculum necessitates the use of successful teaching
101 strategies by business educators. The American Institute of Research (2016) posited that
102 employability skills can be integrated into learning experiences of students using project-based and
103 collaborative teaching strategies, and ensuring that skills are effectively monitored. In addition,
104 regular curriculum revisions, offering skill-based courses, experiential learning opportunities,
105 building industry-university relationships, engaging students, providing in-service training for
106 lecturers, and leveraging ICT into teaching and learning are all other strategies.

107 Currently, one major point of contention among Nigerian employers and policymakers is the
108 efficiency of educational programmes in equipping students with the emerging employability skills

109 for an ever-changing labour market upon graduation. This problem has been compounded by
110 Nigeria's high graduate unemployment. According to Okeke-Ezeanyanwu and Nweke (2021),
111 business education graduates are dissatisfied with their employability, suggesting a gap between
112 skills they possess and the demands of a digitally driven workplace. Akpomi and Ikpesu (2020)
113 noted that organizations in Nigeria are struggling to hire graduates with enough employability
114 skills. UNESCO (2018) reported that Nigerian universities do not fully integrate necessary
115 employability skills into their curricula, implying that existing educational practices are insufficient
116 to prepare graduates for jobs.

117 Some federal and state universities in Nigeria may be encountering difficulties in offering
118 quality teaching and learning due to insufficient funding and instructor experience, which may
119 impede the integration of emerging employability skills into their programmes. A lack of
120 cooperation between business education and industry, particularly in the South East, contributes to
121 the skills gap between education and corporate requirements. Based on this background, this study
122 examined optimal strategies for integrating emerging employability skills into business education
123 programme in universities, South-East Nigeria.

124 **Statement of the Problem**

125 The Nigerian university business education programme is designed to provide students with
126 broader employment abilities upon graduation. Admittedly, business education graduates face
127 labour market prejudice in Nigeria. In light of this, the programme appears to be inadequate, with
128 minimal capacity to enhance students' employability skills for career opportunities in a variety of
129 disciplines. Furthermore, high unemployment rates among graduates have prompted employers and
130 graduates to acknowledge that most skills taught in Nigerian universities are irrelevant to new job
131 roles. The need to integrate emerging employability skills into business education programme has
132 increased as unemployment among the programme's graduates rises. However, in order to
133 effectively integrate these skills into South East Nigerian universities' business education
134 programmes, a number of pressing concerns must be resolved. These concerns include stakeholder
135 collaboration, institutional resources, teaching strategies, and curriculum evaluation. The study
136 sought to improve the employability and competitiveness of graduates by identifying optimal
137 strategies for integrating emerging employability skills into business education programmes at
138 South East Nigerian universities. Specifically, this study ascertained the (1) strategies implemented
139 by business education departments for integrate emerging employability skills into their programme

140 (2) factors hindering the implementation of strategies for integrating emerging employability skills
141 into business education programme in South East Nigerian universities.

142 **Research Questions**

143 The following research questions guided the study;

- 144 1. What are the strategies implemented by business education departments for integrating
145 emerging employability skills into their programme in universities in South East Nigeria?
- 146 2. What factors hinder the implementation of strategies for integrating emerging employability
147 skills into business education programme in South East Nigerian universities?

148 **Null Hypotheses**

149 The following null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance

- 150 1. There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of business education lecturers on
151 strategies implemented for integrating emerging employability skills into their programme in
152 universities in South East Nigeria based on ownership of institution.

153 **Method**

154 The study adopted survey research design. It was carried out in South East, Nigeria.142
155 business education lecturers in both federal and state universities that offer business education
156 programme (Source: Academic Planning Unit of these institutions as at 9th May, 2024). There was
157 no sampling. A self developed structured questionnaire Titled “Identifying Optimal Strategies for
158 Integrating Emerging Employability Skills into Business Education Programme (AOSIEES-BEP)
159 was used for data collection. The instrument was in two sections; A and B. Section A contained
160 item on demographic information of the respondents such as ownership of institutions while
161 Section B contained 20 items, 10 each covering the two research questions. The instrument was
162 structured on a four points rating scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and
163 Strongly Disagree (SD).The face validity and content validity of the instrument were established
164 using the opinions of three experts, two experts from business education department and one expert
165 from Measurement and Evaluation. The internal consistency of the instrument was determined
166 using trial-test and data collected were calculated with Cronbach Alpha formula with correlation
167 coefficients of .88 and .90 obtained for clusters B1 to B2 with an overall value of .89. The researcher
168 administered copies of the questionnaire to the respondents in their institutions with the help of four
169 research assistants. Out of the 142 copies of questionnaires distributed, 134(94%) were correctly
170 filled and returned and used for data analysis. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the
171 research questions and determine the homogeneity of the respondents’ mean ratings while t-test was

172 used to test the null hypotheses at .05 level of significance. A null hypothesis was rejected where
173 the p-value is less than the significant level; otherwise the null hypothesis was accepted. The
174 analysis was carried out using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25.0.

175 **Result**

176 **Table 1: Respondents' Mean Ratings and Standard Deviation on Strategies Implemented by**
177 **Business Education Departments for Integrate Emerging Employability Skills into their**
178 **Programme**

SN	Strategies for Integrating Emerging Employability Skills	X	SD	Remark
1	Utilization of technology-enhanced learning tools	1.79	.89	Disagree
2	Integration of industry-relevant case studies and projects	1.50	.77	Disagree
3	Incorporation of experiential learning opportunities (internships, industry visits, etc.):			
4	Integration of soft skills development modules (communication, leadership, critical thinking, creativity)	2.49	.82	Disagree
5	Collaboration with industry partners for curriculum design and delivery	1.52	.78	Disagree
6	Regular provision of professional development workshops for business education lecturers	2.50	.69	Agree
7	Utilization of collaborative teaching strategy to enhance students' classroom engagement	2.54	.84	Agree
8	Students working together with employers and educators to plan emerging skills for development during lessons	1.49	.75	Strongly disagree
9	Curriculum review and updating on a regular basis	2.56	.61	Agree
10	Business education department organizing regular soft skills training workshops seminars for students to enhance their interpersonal and professional skills	1.47	.58	Strongly disagree
Cluster Mean		1.79		Disagree

180 Data in table 1 reveal that out of 10 strategies listed for integrating emerging employability
181 skills in business education programme, business education lecturer disagree that strategies in items
182 6, 7 and 9 are implemented with mean scores ranging from 2.50 to 2.56. Items 1, 2, 3 and 4 are
183 rated disagree with mean scores ranging from 1.50 to 2.49 while the remaining two items are rated
184 disagree with mean score of 1.47 and 1.49. The cluster mean score of 1.79 shows that business
185 education lecturers disagree that majority of optimal strategies covered in the study are
186 implemented in business education departments for integrate emerging employability skills into the
187 programme. The standard deviations for all the items are within the same range showing that the
188 respondents are not wide apart in their ratings.

189 **Table 2: Respondents' Mean Ratings and Standard Deviation on Factors that hinder the**
190 **implementation of Strategies for Integrating Emerging Employability Skills into Business**
191 **Education Programme**

S/N	Factors hindering Implementation of Strategies	X	SD	Remark
11	Limited budget/resources allocation to business education programme	3.02	.73	Agree
12	Inflexible policies of the university	2.89	.68	Agree
13	Lack of administrative support/leadership	3.78	.71	Strongly Agree
14	Inadequate training and development opportunities for business education lecturers	3.65	.91	Strongly Agree
15	Resistance to change by business education lecturers	2.67	.81	Agree
16	Adoption of traditional teaching methods in instructional delivery	2.78	.58	Agree
17	Lack of awareness and understanding of emerging employability skills by lecturers	2.78	.83	Agree
18	Workload/time constraints	3.91	.78	Strongly Agree
19	Limited collaboration and engagement with industrial experts	2.76	.71	Agree
20	Constant shifting job market demands/industry trends	3.21	.61	Agree
Cluster Mean		3.15		Agree

194

195 Table 2 shows a cluster mean score of 3.15 which indicates that business education lecturers
 196 agree that factors listed hinder the implementation of strategies for integrating emerging
 197 employability skills into business education programme in South East Nigerian universities. The
 198 item by item analysis reveals that items 11, 12, 15, 16, 19 and 20 are rated agree with mean scores
 199 of 2.67 to 3.21 while items 13, 14 and 18 are rated strongly agree with mean scores ranging from
 200 3.65 to 3.91. The standard deviations for all the items are within the same range showing that the
 201 respondents are not wide apart in their ratings.

202 **Table 3: Summary of t-test Analysis of Significant Difference in the Mean Ratings of Business**
 203 **Education Lecturers on Strategies Implemented for Integrating Emerging Employability**
 204 **Skills into Business Education Programme Based on Ownership of Institutions**

Ownership of Institution	N	X	SD	df	t-value	P-value	Decision
Federal	53	1.81	.86	132	1.18	.69	Not Significant
State	81	2.09	.68				

206 Data in Table 3 show that t-value of 1.32 at 132 degree of freedom with a p-value of .69
 207 which is greater than the alpha value of .05 (.68 > .05). Since the p-value is greater than the
 208 significant value, the null hypothesis is therefore accepted. This means that there is no significant
 209 difference in the mean ratings of business education lecturers on strategies implemented for
 210 integrating emerging employability skills into their programme in universities in South East Nigeria
 211 based on ownership of institution.

213 **Discussion of Findings**

Findings of the study revealed that business education lecturer agree that majority of the optimal strategies listed in the study are implemented by business education departments for integrate emerging employability skills into their programme in universities in South East Nigeria. While business education lecturers agree that regular professional development workshops are provided to them, they utilize collaborative teaching strategy to enhance students' classroom engagement, and business education curriculum are reviewed and updated on a regular basis, they disagree on the remaining strategies being implemented in their department. Findings of the study agree with the findings of Emeasoba (2017) which showed that partnership between business education and industries are inadequate. Nungse, Ugwoke, Ogbuanya, and Shetima (2020) regretted lack of industry-business education collaboration to close employable skills gap. Jobberman (2021) reported employability skills gap between Nigerian graduates and the digital-driven workplace. Akpomi and Ikpesu (2020) found that employers in Nigeria are struggling to hire graduates with enough employability skills. Additionally, UNESCO (2018) reported that there were significant disparities in employability skills among Nigerian tertiary institution graduates.

Findings of the study also revealed that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of business education lecturers on strategies implemented for integrating emerging employability skills into their programme in universities in South East Nigeria based on ownership of institution. It may be probable that business education programs at both federal and state institutions follow identical curriculum requirements or rules established by accrediting agencies or educational authorities. As a result, regardless of institutional ownership, there may be uniformity in the strategies used to integrate emerging employability skills into the curriculum. This consistency in curriculum design and delivery may reduce differences in the perceptions and ratings of business education lecturers in both state and federal universities.

Findings of the study also revealed that business education lecturers agree that factors listed hinder the implementation of strategies for integrating emerging employability skills into business education programme in South East Nigerian universities. In agreement, Obi Irukaku, Ile and Chibuzo (2020) reported that identified lack of adequate lecturers with the required skills; deteriorating infrastructure; inadequate ICT facilities for simulations and poor funding of business education programme as some of the challenges to integrating transferable skills into business education programme. Similarly, Okoye and Nwagu (2022) reported that inadequate of pedagogical skills of business education lecturers prevent them from training students on soft skills. The findings of this study is not far off from the earlier perception of the researcher that many factors

246 hinder business education lecturers from adopting effective strategies required to integrate emerging
247 employability skills.

248 **Conclusion**

249 Based on the findings of the study, the researcher concluded that business education
250 departments in South East universities are not implementing optimal strategies for integrating
251 emerging employability skills into their programme. It was also concluded that there are many
252 challenges hindering the successful integration of emerging employability skills into the business
253 education programme in South East universities.

254 **Recommendations**

255 Based on the findings of the study, the researcher made the following recommendations:

- 256 1. Business education lecturers in Nigerian universities should utilize technology enhanced
257 teaching strategies in their course delivery. This will help to promote students' active
258 engagement in classroom processes.
- 259 2. Business education lecturers in Nigerian universities should integrate industry-relevant case
260 studies and projects as strategies for instructional delivery.
- 261 3. Business education departments in Nigerian universities should work more closely with
262 industries to align their curriculum with current skill requirements, industry trends, and best
263 practices, ensuring relevance to real-world settings and employer needs.
- 264 4. Administrators of universities in Nigeria should organize regular in-service training and
265 development programme for business education lecturers to enable them up-date their teaching
266 skills required to impart emerging employability skills to their students.

273 **References**

274 Akinyemi, D. (2023).Certificates no longer guarantee jobs, seek demonstrable skills – JAMB
275 Registrar Oloyede tells students. <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2023/12/certificates-no-longer-guarantee-jobs-seek-demonstrable-skills-jamb-registrar-oloyede-tells-students/>

277 American Institute for Research (2018). Integrating Employability Skills: A Framework for All
278 Educators https://ccrscenter.org/sites/default/files/EmployabilitySkills_PPT_0.pdf

279 Federal Republic of Nigeria (2014). Labour market expectations of Nigerian graduates. Abuja:
280 Education Trust Fund (ETF)

281 Goetze, T. (2019). The concept of a university: Theory, practice, and society. *Danish Year book of*
282 *Philosophy*, 52(1). 61-81. orcid.org/0000-0002-3435-3264

283 Nwaukwa, F. C., Iloeje, E., Nzech, O. A. & Nwagu, E. C. (2018). Training needs of business
284 educators and entrepreneurial skills acquisition by business education undergraduate for
285 sustainable development. *Merit Research Journal of Agricultural Science and Soil Science*,
286 6(2), 043-053. Available at: <http://meritresearchjournals.org/asss/index.htm>

287 Obi B. Irukaku, SR. M. N., Ile, M., & Chibuzo, N. (2020). Challenges of integrating transferable
288 skills in business education programme in nigerian colleges of education. *African Journal of*
289 *Education, Science and Technology*, 5(4), 208-215.

290 Okoye, A.C. & Nwagu, C. C. (2022). Business education and acquisition of employability skills for
291 global competitiveness in the covid-19 era: competency needs of business educators in
292 Anambra State. *COOU Journal of Educational Research*, 7(1), 153 – 164.

293 Onojaife, C. A. (2019). Business education and entrepreneurial skill acquisition for sustainable
294 economic development: Competency needs of business educators in Delta State. *Journal of*
295 *Policy and Development Studies*, 11(14), 33-41.

296 Osinem, O. & Nwoji, S. (2020). Unemployment and security challenges in Nigeria. *International*
297 *Journal of Humanities and social science* 3(7), 146-156.

298 Udie, M. U. & Nwosu, B. O. (2023). Skills required of business education graduates for effective
299 job performance in modern offices in Cross River State. *International Journal of Innovative*
300 *Education Research* 11(2), 183-192.

301 UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES) (2009). Employability Skills Framework.
302 <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/uk-commission-for-employment-and-skills>

303 United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (2018). Higher
304 Education. Retrieved from <https://en.unesco.org/themes/higher-education>

305

306

307

308

309

310