

ACQUISITION OF VERBAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS AND ICT COMPETENCY AS
DETERMINANTS OF JOB CREATION POTENTIALS OF UNDERGRADUATES IN SOUTH-
SOUTH FEDERAL UNIVERSITIES, NIGERIA.

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated acquisition of verbal communication skills and ICT competency as determinants of job creation potentials of undergraduates in south-south federal universities, Nigeria. The study adopted ex-post-facto research design method. This study covers six federal Universities located in the South-South Geo-Political Zone. Multi-stage sampling technique was used as follows (stratified sampling technique to select 4 faculties from the three selected Federal Universities in the South-South zone and Simple random sampling was used in selecting the required sample size for each faculty in the study population). A sample size of 580 entrepreneurial undergraduate students from the three Universities were considered in the study. A sample size of 580 entrepreneurial undergraduate students from the three Universities were considered in the study. University of Calabar contributed 220 respondents, University of Uyo 171 respondents and University of Port Harcourt 189 respondents. This study used two research questionnaires to collect data from the respondents. They were titled 'Undergraduate Students' Entrepreneurship Skills Acquisition Questionnaire (USESAQ) and Job Creation Potentials Questionnaire (JCPQ) was designed by the researcher. The instruments were given to the researchers' supervisor and 3 experts in Test and Measurement in the Faculty of Education, University of Calabar to screen the Items for face validity. Data collected were analyzed using Cronbach Alpha reliability test method to estimate their internal consistency. Using 6 trained research assistants, copies of the questionnaires were distributed to the 3 sampled Universities on different times. The findings of the data analysis rejected the null hypothesis which stated that acquisition of verbal communication skills has no significant relationship to job creation potentials of undergraduates. The result in the same vein also rejected the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant relationship between acquisition of ICT competency and job creation potentials of undergraduates. The study concluded that the acquisition of verbal communication skills and ICT competency significantly enhances the job creation potential of undergraduates in South-South Federal Universities in Nigeria. It was recommended among others that not only should entrepreneurship skills acquisition be made more of practical programme in schools but theories should equip the youths with the basic skills required for optimal performance, they will be able to create jobs and become self employed.

Keywords: Verbal Communication, ICT Competency, Undergraduates Students, Job Creation, South-South, Federal Universities and Nigeria.

Introduction

The economic challenges facing many developing countries have led policymakers and academics to prioritize the acquisition of essential skills, particularly verbal communication skills and ICT competency, as crucial determinants of job creation potential. Entrepreneurship has long been recognized as an essential economic driver, significantly contributing to job creation and national economic growth. In Nigeria, however, an overemphasis on obtaining certificates rather than building practical skills has hindered graduates' ability to contribute effectively to job creation. Nigerian graduates, who should be equipped to create their own job opportunities, often focus on obtaining qualifications instead of the entrepreneurial skills and competencies—such as effective communication and ICT—that would make them self-reliant. This trend has led to a concerning rise in unemployment, poverty, and social issues among graduates.

The transformative potential of entrepreneurship is widely acknowledged, as it generates new industries, job opportunities, and wealth, especially through competent, skilled graduates (Fauziah and Sulaiman, 2015). Historically, entrepreneurship has served as an alternative to traditional employment, particularly for higher education graduates (Ismail, 2018). A more entrepreneurial approach to education, which includes strengthening verbal communication and ICT skills, could drive job creation, promote economic stability, and reduce youth unemployment. With the growing demand for higher education and a rapidly changing job market, integrating these competencies into educational curricula is increasingly seen as a potential remedy for graduate unemployment (Okiti, 2017).

Skills acquisition plays a crucial role in this process, equipping students with practical knowledge that enables self-employment and job creation. Hands-on training in areas such as effective communication and ICT is essential, as these skills empower graduates to contribute to their communities' growth and development. This training prepares them for an uncertain job market by fostering self-sufficiency and reducing dependency on traditional employment pathways, which are often saturated.

Moreover, evidence suggests that when graduates receive training in entrepreneurship alongside communication and ICT skills, they are more inclined to take entrepreneurial actions, showing competence and confidence in starting

businesses (Shane, 2017). These training programs offer essential skills, including financial management, marketing, and effective communication, that graduates need to navigate the challenges of entrepreneurship successfully. Formal entrepreneurship education, therefore, has been recognized as instrumental in equipping graduates with the skills necessary for self-reliance and enterprise creation (Chen and Lai, 2010).

Despite these educational reforms, graduate unemployment remains high in Nigeria, and many young graduates face economic and psychological hardships due to limited job opportunities. The government has made efforts to encourage entrepreneurship among graduates, but job creation still lags behind population growth. Unemployment contributes to broader social challenges, including insecurity, poverty, and dependency, placing added pressure on the government and communities (Ajufu and Simkovic, 2016). This scenario suggests an urgent need to reassess educational strategies and improve skills acquisition programs, particularly in verbal communication and ICT, to address the unemployment crisis effectively.

In light of these issues, this study examines the acquisition of verbal communication skills and ICT competency in South-South Nigerian federal universities as determinants of graduates' job creation potential. By identifying the connection between these skills and job creation, this research aims to highlight the effectiveness of current educational practices in fostering self-employment among graduates and address the growing demand for innovative job creation solutions.

Statement of the problem

Entrepreneurship is a crucial economic driver that contributes to job creation, poverty reduction, and innovation. It is a topic of significant discussion among policymakers and academics due to its potential to reduce unemployment. However, rising graduate unemployment in Nigeria remains a pressing issue, with many graduates, despite completing entrepreneurship courses, still dependent on government jobs rather than launching their own ventures. This reliance often leads to frustration and, in some cases, drives graduates toward social vices due to their inability to secure employment. A significant barrier to effective entrepreneurial action among graduates is their struggle to apply essential skills, particularly verbal communication and ICT competency. Many lack the confidence to write viable business plans and take the necessary risks to start businesses. Although entrepreneurship education has been

implemented in Nigerian universities, graduates frequently fail to identify or pursue viable business opportunities. Given the Nigerian government's focus on equipping graduates with practical skills for job creation, it is imperative to investigate how the acquisition of verbal communication skills and ICT competency influences the job creation potential of undergraduates in federal universities in South-South Nigeria. This study aims to explore this relationship to better understand the factors affecting graduates' readiness to engage in entrepreneurship and self-employment.

Objectives

Specifically, the purpose of this study is to establish the relationship between:

1. Acquisition of verbal communication skills and job creation potentials of undergraduates
2. Acquisition of ICT competency and job creation potentials of undergraduates

Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated to guide the study:

1. How does Acquisition of verbal communication skills relate to job creation potentials of undergraduates?
2. What is the relationship between acquisition of ICT competency and job creation potentials of undergraduates?

Hypothesis

The following hypothesis will be tested in the course of this research

- H1 Acquisition of verbal communication skills has no significant relationship to job creation potentials of undergraduates
- H2 There is no significant relationship between acquisition of ICT competency and job creation potentials of undergraduates

LITERATURE REVIEW

Acquisition of verbal communication skills and job creation potentials of undergraduates

Chinwe's (2018) study examines the impact of communication skills on job creation among Nigerian students. This research specifically determined the essential communication skills students need for entrepreneurship, as well as the teaching methods required to support these skills. Conducted using a descriptive survey approach, the study utilized a questionnaire administered to a sample of 441 students. Analysis using mean and standard deviation revealed that communication skills play a vital role in entrepreneurship, emphasizing the need for instructors to adopt practical teaching approaches. Importantly, the findings indicated a significant relationship between communication skills and job creation potential. The study recommended targeted lecturer training to emphasize teaching strategies that foster innovative communication abilities rather than relying heavily on traditional lectures.

Ahmad (2012) further posits that students with a solid grounding in communication skills are better positioned to enhance their entrepreneurial capabilities. This research asserts that verbal communication fosters self-confidence and enhances job creation potential. In today's competitive world, undergraduates are expected to acquire these essential communication skills alongside technical abilities to improve their employability. Effective communication, especially in English, is critical for young entrepreneurs as it helps convey ideas and information with clarity, while proper language use in speaking, reading, and writing is crucial for achieving success in globalized business contexts. Competent verbal communication not only enhances personal interactions but is also essential for professional relationships.

Dutta (2015) discusses the importance of English language proficiency for entrepreneurs, especially in the current era of globalization. Effective communication skills, particularly in English, have become essential in fields such as business, education, and entrepreneurship, enabling entrepreneurs to build relationships with clients and colleagues. Dutta highlights that many students, unfortunately, lack adequate communication skills, with challenges in grammar, pronunciation, and the use of idioms prevalent even at university levels. Consequently, there is a pressing need for comprehensive language training to improve these areas and support entrepreneurial development.

The role of communication skills in job creation is underscored by the requirement to develop competencies such as presentation skills and effective verbal interactions. Entrepreneurs need a solid command of language to navigate competitive business environments. English proficiency, as a foundational skill, contributes to the acquisition of additional soft skills that are vital for professional advancement. These skills, combined with the ability to present ideas coherently and persuade stakeholders, are crucial for entrepreneurship success, particularly in multicultural or globalized settings.

Communication skills entrepreneurship skills acquisition programs plays key role in job creation. These programs aim to develop students' entrepreneurial knowledge, skills, and attitudes, equipping them to establish new businesses upon graduation. Kalam's findings suggest that students involved in these programs are more likely to develop entrepreneurial traits and launch successful ventures. The overall objective is not only to educate students but also to instill a sustained entrepreneurial mindset, ultimately contributing to the job market by fostering self-employment.

Finally, a study by Nwaogwugwu and Okoye (2018) on female entrepreneurs in Nigeria revealed that communication skills are integral to business success. The study, which employed a questionnaire method with a sample of 245 female entrepreneurs, found that these skills contribute significantly to entrepreneurial achievements. Based on these findings, the researchers recommended that local organizations facilitate workshops to promote awareness about the value of communication skills in entrepreneurship. Through such training, female entrepreneurs can better understand how communication proficiency impacts business growth and sustainability, helping them to better navigate the demands of their ventures.

Acquisition of ICT competency and job creation potentials of undergraduates

Orieoma (2018) conducted a study examining how students in Nigeria acquire ICT-based skills and the connection of these skills to job creation. This research, a survey type, focused on third- and fourth-year Faculty of Education students enrolled in the 2017/2018 academic session at Ebonyi State University in Abakaliki. From a total population of 1,570 students, a sample of 300 was chosen through proportionate random sampling techniques. The study aimed to address two research questions using a nine-item questionnaire, validated by experts and yielding a reliability coefficient of 0.72 via Cronbach's alpha. Of the questionnaires distributed, 233 were accurately completed and returned, and data were subsequently analyzed using frequency counts and percentages.

The findings of the study revealed that many students had acquired fundamental ICT skills such as data processing, document editing, and a general improvement in ICT literacy. Peer tutoring among students was also identified as a common practice, which not only supported individual learning but also facilitated a collaborative learning environment. These ICT skills appeared to be directly related to students' courses of study, reflecting an integration of technology with academic specialization. This relationship underscores the role of ICT in developing student competencies that can be applied within various educational contexts and future career settings.

In addition, Orieoma's research pointed to ICT skills as a significant factor in job creation, suggesting that the competencies students develop can open pathways to employment and entrepreneurial opportunities. This correlation supports the growing emphasis on ICT as a critical tool for economic development, as these skills enhance employability and encourage innovation among students. The study therefore

recommended an urgent curriculum review by the Nigerian government, advocating for the inclusion of more ICT-based learning modules to better prepare students for the technological demands of the modern workforce.

Furthermore, the study recommended that Nigerian universities implement re-training programs for lecturers through ICT workshops and advanced courses, ensuring that educators remain up-to-date with technological advances. With ICT experts leading these initiatives, lecturers would be more equipped to pass relevant skills on to students, ultimately enriching the learning environment. This proposed intervention aligns with global educational trends, where teacher training in ICT integration is regarded as essential to preparing students for a technology-driven job market.

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has become an indispensable component in education systems worldwide, significantly impacting teaching, learning, and research practices. In more developed countries, ICT has transformed the education sector by enabling dynamic and interactive content that supports flexible and individualized instruction. ICT tools not only enhance students' skills but also create an engaging, real-world connected learning environment, which is crucial for students' future work readiness and global competitiveness.

In sum, Oriema's (2018) study emphasizes that ICT skills acquisition is a valuable asset for students in Nigerian universities, with potential benefits extending into career and job creation prospects. By advocating for a proactive government role in curriculum development and continuous teacher training, the study highlights a strategic pathway for integrating ICT into education and fostering an economically viable workforce. The findings suggest that increased ICT integration could lead to greater economic productivity and resilience, empowering students and teachers alike to contribute meaningfully in a globalized, tech-oriented economy.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted ex-post-facto research design method. This study covers six federal Universities located in the South-South Geo-Political Zone. The population of this study comprises of final year undergraduate students offering entrepreneurial studies from University of Port Harcourt, University of Uyo, University of Calabar, Federal University of Petroleum Resources Effurun, Federal University of Otuoke and University of Benin. The six federal Universities have a total of 18,910 entrepreneurial undergraduate students during the 2017/2018 academic session. Multi-stage sampling technique (Simple random sampling technique was used in this study to select 3 out of 6 Federal Universities in the South-South zone and stratified sampling technique was used to select 4 faculties from the three selected Federal Universities in the South-South zone). Simple random sampling was used in selecting the required sample size for each faculty in the study population. For faculty of education, 76 undergraduate students (calculated size) out of a total number of 620 undergraduate students were randomly selected from the University of Calabar. For faculty of Art, 53 undergraduate students (calculated size) were randomly selected. For faculty of management sciences, 63 undergraduate students (calculated size) were randomly selected from a total of 511. For faculty of

Allied medicine, 28 undergraduate students (calculated size) were randomly selected from a total of 230. This method was used to select respondents from the University of Port Harcourt and University of Uyo. A sample size of 580 entrepreneurial undergraduate students from the three Universities were considered in the study. A breakdown shows that University of Calabar contributed 220 respondents, University of Uyo 171 respondents and University of Port Harcourt 189 respondents. This study used two research questionnaires to collect data from the respondents. They were titled 'Undergraduate Students' Entrepreneurship Skills Acquisition Questionnaire (USES AQ) and Job Creation Potentials Questionnaire (JCPQ) was designed by the researcher. The instruments were given to the researchers' supervisor and 3 experts in Test and Measurement in the Faculty of Education, University of Calabar to screen the Items for face validity. Data collected were analyzed using Cronbach Alpha reliability test method to estimate their internal consistency.

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis 1

Acquisition of verbal communication skills has no significant relationship with job creation potentials of undergraduates

Independent Variable: Acquisition of verbal communication skills

Dependent Variable: Job creation potentials of undergraduates

Statistical Tool: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient Analysis

TABLE 1

Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) analysis of the relationship between acquisition of verbal communication skills and job creation potentials of undergraduates (N = 580)

Variables	Mean	Std. Deviation	r_{xy}	P-value
Acquisition of verbal communication skills (X)	19.342	1.233		
			.594*	.000
Job creation potentials (Y)	28.72	1.090		

* $p < .05$; $df = 125$; critical $r = .174$

Discussion/Findings

Table 1 showed that at .05 level of significance and degrees of freedom 125, the critical r-value is 0.174. The calculated r-value obtained in establishing the relationship acquisition of verbal communication skills and job creation potentials of undergraduates in south-south federal universities is 0.594 ($p < .05$). The calculated r-value is seen to be greater than the critical r-value with the obtained significant value

less than .05 level of significance used in the study. With these results the null hypothesis which stated that acquisition of verbal communication skills has no significant relationship to job creation potentials of undergraduates was rejected. It was alternately accepted that acquisition of verbal communication skills has a significant relationship to job creation potentials of undergraduates.

The obtained correlation coefficient was positive indicating positive correlation between the independent and the dependent variable; meaning that increase in variable X will bring about increase in variable Y. This showed that more increase in acquisition of verbal communication skills of entrepreneurship students will bring about increase in job creation potentials of undergraduates in south-south federal universities, Nigeria. Findings from this study is in line with the study of Chinwe, (2018) whose studies found that there is a significant relationship between communication skills and job creation among students. It also corroborates with the study of Ahmad, (2012) which revealed that verbal communication skills develop self-confidence, and also increase the individuals' job creation potentials.

Hypothesis 2

There is no significant relationship between acquisition of ICT competency and job creation potentials of undergraduates

Independent Variable: Acquisition of ICT competency

Dependent Variable: Job creation potentials of undergraduates

Statistical Tool: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient Analysis

TABLE 2

Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) analysis of the relationship between acquisition of ICT competency and job creation potentials of undergraduates (N = 580).

Variables	Mean	Std. Deviation	rxy	P-value
Acquisition of ICT competency (X)	18.053	1.192		
			.550*	.000
Job creation potentials (Y)	28.72	1.090		

* $p < .05$; $df = 125$; critical $r = .174$

Discussion/Findings

Table 2 showed that at .05 level of significance and degrees of freedom 125, the critical r-value is 0.174. The calculated r-value obtained in establishing the relationship between acquisition of ICT competency and job creation potentials of undergraduates in south-south federal universities, Nigeria is 0.550 ($p < .05$). The calculated r-value is seen to be greater than the critical r-value with the obtained significant value less than .05

level of significance used in the study. With these results the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant relationship between acquisition of ICT competency and job creation potentials of undergraduates was rejected. It was alternately accepted that there is significant relationship between acquisition of ICT competency and job creation potentials of undergraduates.

The obtained correlation coefficient was positive indicating positive correlation between the independent and the dependent variable; meaning that increase in variable X will bring about increase in variable Y. This showed that increase in acquisition of ICT competency will bring about increase in job creation potentials of undergraduates in south-south federal universities, Nigeria. Findings from this study is in line with the study of Oriema,(2018) whose studies found that ICT skills acquisition has led to job creation. Similarly also, the result is in line with the findings of Adejimola & Olufunmilayo, (2018) who posited that introducing ICT in organization enhances the day to day activities; input and output facilities which facilitate interrogation of files, alterations, displays and retrieval of information which are not possible with manual system.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that the acquisition of verbal communication skills and ICT competency significantly enhances the job creation potential of undergraduates in South-South Federal Universities in Nigeria. The findings of the analysed data concluded that there is a significant relationship between the acquisition of verbal communication skills and job creation potentials of undergraduates. The result in the same vein also rejected the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant relationship between acquisition of ICT competency and job creation potentials of undergraduates. These skills empower students to develop, manage, and transform business ideas effectively, equipping them with the tools to create employment opportunities in a rapidly evolving digital economy. By mastering communication and ICT skills, undergraduates can adapt to diverse business environments, enabling them to initiate, operate, and sustain businesses from any location. This skill acquisition fosters entrepreneurial growth and provides undergraduates with a strong foundation for future success in business management and profit maximization.

Recommendations

In line with the findings of the study and the conclusion drawn, the following recommendations were made:

1. Not only that entrepreneurship skills acquisition should be made more of practical programme in schools than theory to equip the youths with the basic skillsrequired for optimal performance, they will be able to create jobs and become self employed.

2. Entrepreneurship programmes and modules can have various objectives, such as: developing the entrepreneurial drive to identify and exploit opportunities as well as training students in the skills they need to set up a business and manage its growth. This can be achieved through the use of appropriate entrepreneurial related educational materials that will sensitise the students and awaken their entrepreneurial skills for job creation and self-employment.

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