



## EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AMONG BUSINESS STUDIES STUDENTS IN THE FEDERAL CAPITAL TERRITORY

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### Abstract

Employability skills refer to work-readiness, that is, possession of skills, knowledge, attitude and commercial understanding that will enable new graduates to make productive contributions to organizational objectives soon after commencing employment. Failure to acquire these work-readiness skills makes one unemployable. Despite the widespread drive to develop employability skills of students, many students leave school without the requisite skills to succeed in the world of work. The study adopted descriptive survey design with the population focus of all Business Studies Teachers in Secondary Schools in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT). Random sampling technique was used to select seven schools from each of the six area councils in the FCT making a total of 42 schools. From each school, five business studies teachers were purposively selected. Thus, a total of 210 participants were selected across the FCT as the study sample. The instrument used in data collection for the study was an adapted forty-one items questionnaire titled "Employability Skills Development Questionnaire" (ESDQ). The items in the questionnaire were assigned a four point modified Likert rating scale worded as: Very Large Extent, Large Extent, Little Extent and Not at all, weighted 4,3,2,1 respectively. Using Chronbach Alpha formula, a reliability coefficient of  $r = 0.87$  was obtained after trial testing of the instrument. Frequency count, percentages, mean and standard deviation were used to analyze the data collected for the study. The findings revealed business studies teachers awareness of the employability skills, systems and technology aspect and students exposure were at little extent. It was recommended among others that government make available funds for the procurement of technology tools for the development of the business students and teachers should ensure that students are exposed to practical activities in the process of developing employability skills in the students.

**Key words:** Employability skills development, Business studies students, Federal Capital Territory.

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### Introduction

A country's economic strength and vitality, their productivity and international competitiveness, depends on their capacity to build and maintain a quality workforce. The foundation of a quality workforce rests with the ability of the country's school systems to provide the basic reading, writing and mathematical skills as well as an appreciation for the work ethic, which young people must possess to perform effectively in the workplace. As the economy continues to evolve in response to technological developments and the need to compete in a global market, the nation needs a highly skilled and flexible workforce. It is now widely recognized that the skills and knowledge that students need for life and work beyond school are much more than proficiency in the traditional '3Rs.' Apart from the basic skills of reading, writing and numeracy; a broader range of skills and knowledge is now essential for students to make an effective transition from school to work. This includes employability skills.

Employability skills are defined as the foundational academic, personal and teamwork skills that employers expect of workers and which they expect to be developed by the education system



(Conference Board of Canada, 2000). Employability skill is a group of important skills instilled in each individual in order to produce productive workforce. They are non-technical skills and sometimes called transferable skills needed by individuals to make them employable (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics Network, 2014). Clarke (2007) noted that employability skills consist of basic skills that include: thinking skills, resource skills, information skills, interpersonal skills, system and technology skills and personal qualities. The Secretary Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS, 2000) identified seven employability skills related to a certain task, these are: basic skills, thinking, resource, information, interpersonal, system/ technology and personal quality skills. Zinser (2003) stated that employability skills include areas such as managing resources, communication and interpersonal skills, team work and problem-solving and acquiring and retaining a job. Employability skills are those essential skills necessary for getting, keeping, and doing well on a job. These are the skills, attitudes and actions that enable workers to get along with their fellow workers and supervisors and to make sound, critical decisions. Unlike occupational or technical skills, employability skills are common in nature rather than job specific and cut across all industry types, business sizes, and job levels from the entry-level worker to the most senior position (Robinson & Garton, 2008). According to Lorraine and Sewell (2007) employability skills are the skills, knowledge, understanding and personal attributes that enable a person to obtain employment, and to be successful and satisfied in their chosen career. Barnett (2006) viewed employability skills as skills that enable people to obtain suitable employment and at the same time develop their careers during social and technological change. Similarly, Toland (2011) observed that employability skills are non-discipline specific, economically valuable skills required to get initial employment, progress in a job, as well as securing another job when desired. Employability skill is a set of achievement skills, understandings and personal attitudes that make graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations, which benefit themselves, the workforce, the community and the economy (Weligamage, 2009). From the stand point of employers of labour, employability skills refer to work-readiness, that is, possession of skills, knowledge, attitude and commercial understanding that will enable new graduates to make productive contributions to organizational objectives soon after commencing employment (Mason, 1999). Failure to acquire these work-readiness skills makes one unemployable, a situation that is worrisome and unacceptable.

Two very important concerns of employers of labour today are employing skilled workers and re-training them if need arises (Robinson, 2000). Thus, young people should take keen interest in ensuring that they add value to their own worth by building themselves in academics, character and other skills needed in the work place (Idaka, 2013).

Commenting on the role of employability skills, Idaka (2013) opined that any country that loses competitiveness in this globalized world as a result of lack of employable skills stands the risk of having foreigners take up job positions meant for her citizens. Overtoom (2000) corroborated Idaka's statement when he explained that employability skill is also crucial in all professions as well as in education. Those who possessed these skills have always been preferred, particularly in the private sector. Robinson et al. (2007) noted that there is a great demand for educated people with



employability skills and specialized technical skills. Workers in the 21st century need skills such as problem-solving and analytic, decision-making, organization and time management, risk-taking, and communication to be employable in the workforce.

Despite the widespread drive to develop employability skills of students, there are still gaps between graduate workplace performance and employers' expectations. Many students leave education without the requisite skills to succeed in the world of work. Many young people are deficient in employability skills, mainly because schools do not sufficiently emphasize such skills and students lack awareness of the skills needed in the world of work. Researches revealed that schools are doing a poor job of developing the career and employability skills of the students, therefore hindering their success in the adult work world. A good number of secondary school students leave school without a solid base of academic and employability skills that will enable them to succeed in a career.

The preparations to acquire employability skills begin when a person is still in the learning process. These skills cannot be developed in students without emphasis on effective instruction by teachers. Audu et al. (2013) affirmed that employability skills must be emphasized in institutions of learning because these skills can accelerate employment among youths and school leavers. Without these skills, students can be considered disadvantaged in competing for employment after graduation from school. The development of employability skills call for effective and efficient teaching to ensure the production of desired quality of the graduates with enterprising skills. The quality of the teaching and the utilization of the right method of teaching by the teachers play an important role in the development of employability skills among students.

It is therefore against this background that this study sought to investigate the level of employability skills developed in secondary school students of Business Studies by teachers. To sharpen this study, the following research questions were postulated:

What is the level of Secondary School Teachers' awareness of employability skills?

What is the extent of employability skills developed among business studies Students in the Federal Capital Territory by teachers in basic skills, thinking resource, information, interpersonal, system/ technology and personal quality.

What teaching methods is used by teachers in FCT in developing employability skills among secondary school students

## **Method**

The study adopted descriptive survey design with the population focus of all Business Studies Teachers in Secondary Schools in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT). Random sampling technique was used to select seven schools from each of the Six Area Councils in the FCT making a total of 42 schools. From each school, 5 Business Studies teachers were purposively selected. Thus, a total of 210 participants were selected across the FCT as the study sample. The instrument used in the collection of data for the study was an adapted forty-one items questionnaire titled "Employability Skills Development Questionnaire" (ESDQ). The items in the questionnaire were assigned a four point modified Likert rating scale worded as: Very large extent, Large extent, Little extent and Not at all, weighted 4,3,2,1 respectively. The items were adapted from Kazilan, F.; Hamzah, R. and Ab. R. Bakar (2009) and Orji (2013). Using Chronbach Alpha formula, a reliability coefficient of  $r = 0.87$  was

obtained after trial testing of the instrument. 210 questionnaires were administered, but 195 were returned and used for the study. Frequency count, percentages, mean and standard deviation were used to analyze the data collected for the study. Any mean below 2.5 is rejected.

## Results

### Research Question 1:

What is the level of Business Studies Teachers' awareness of Employability Skills?

**Table 1:** Business Studies Teachers' Level of Awareness of Employability Skills

| S/N | Aspect of Skills           | Awareness Level |            | Unawareness Level |            |
|-----|----------------------------|-----------------|------------|-------------------|------------|
|     |                            | Frequency       | Percentage | Frequency         | Percentage |
| 1.  | Basic Skills               | 181             | 94.3       | 11                | 5.7        |
| 2.  | Thinking Skills            | 179             | 93.2       | 13                | 6.8        |
| 3.  | Resource Capability Skills | 184             | 95.8       | 8                 | 4.2        |
| 4.  | System and Technology      | 165             | 85.9       | 27                | 14.1       |
| 5.  | Interpersonal Skills       | 179             | 93.2       | 13                | 6.8        |
| 6.  | Information Skills         | 187             | 97.4       | 5                 | 2.6        |
| 7.  | Personal Quality           | 172             | 89.6       | 20                | 10.4       |

Table 1 presents the level of awareness Business Studies teachers' on employability skills in the Federal Capital Territory. Information skills had the highest frequency with 97.4%, followed by Resource Capability Skills with 95.8% and Basic Skills with 94.3%. Item with the least frequency is 'System and Technology' with 85.9% each. Implication is that teachers awareness level of employability is high.

### Research Question 2

What is the extent of employability skills developed among Business Studies Students in the Federal Capital Territory?

|    | Basic Skills       | Mean | StD  | Decision     |
|----|--------------------|------|------|--------------|
| 1. | Reading skills     | 3.54 | 0.50 | Large extent |
| 2. | Writing skills     | 3.66 | 0.48 | Large extent |
| 3. | Listening skills   | 3.59 | 0.62 | Large extent |
| 4. | Speaking skills    | 3.28 | 0.70 | Large extent |
| 5. | Mathematics skills | 3.03 | 0.56 | Large extent |

*Overall Mean = 3.42*

Table 2 shows that the item with the highest mean score for aspect of basic skills is 'writing skills' with (Mean = 3.66, SD = 0.48). Respondents also agreed that the extent to which listening skills and reading skills are developed in their students is at large extent level. The (Mean = 3.59, SD 0.62) and (Mean = 3.54, SD = 0.50) respectively. The item 'Mathematics skills' has the lowest mean score (Mean = 3.03, SD = 0.56) is mathematics for basic skills. The finding also showed that all items are at large extent. It can be said that for the aspect of basic skills, the extent to which are developed these skills in their students is at large extent.



**Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviations for the Aspect of Thinking Skills**

| Thinking Skills                       | Mean | StD  | Decision     |
|---------------------------------------|------|------|--------------|
| 1. ability to be creative             | 3.08 | 1.04 | Large extent |
| 2. ability to make decisions          | 2.77 | 1.14 | Large extent |
| 3. Problem solving skill              | 3.52 | 0.50 | Large extent |
| 4. Receiving things in the mind's eye | 2.93 | 0.51 | Large extent |
| 5. Ability to learn quickly           | 3.42 | 0.63 | Large extent |
| 6. Reasoning ability                  | 3.22 | 0.57 | Large extent |

Overall Mean = 3.16

Table 3 shows teachers responses to the extent of development of thinking skills in their students. The item with the highest means score is 'problem solving (mean = 3.52, SD = 0.50). The findings also revealed that teachers developed 'ability to learn quickly' to a large extent.

**Table 4: Mean and Standard Deviations for the Aspect of Resource Capability Skills**

| Resource Capability Skills           | Mean | StD  | Decision     |
|--------------------------------------|------|------|--------------|
| 1. Ability to manage Time            | 3.39 | 0.91 | Large extent |
| 2. Ability to manage Finance         | 3.34 | 0.90 | Large extent |
| 3. Materials management ability      | 2.93 | 0.93 | Large extent |
| 4. Teaching management ability       | 3.23 | 0.62 | Large extent |
| 5. Human resource management ability | 3.36 | 0.61 | Large extent |
| 6. Risk management ability           | 2.90 | 0.63 | Large extent |

Overall Mean = 3.19

Table 4 shows overall mean for 'Resource Capability Skills'(3.19). The finding revealed that all the items in the category is above the stipulated mean of 2.50. This implies that the respondents developed employability skills in their students to a large extent.

**Table 5: Mean and Standard Deviations for the Aspect of System and Technology**

| System and Technology Skills                 | Mean | StD  | Decision      |
|----------------------------------------------|------|------|---------------|
| 1. Understanding Systems                     | 2.41 | 0.59 | Little extent |
| 2. Observe and improve on the implementation | 2.30 | 0.71 | Little extent |
| 3. Selects Technology                        | 2.25 | 0.56 | Little extent |
| 4. Applying technology to tasks              | 2.17 | 0.75 | Little extent |

Overall Mean = 2.28

Overall mean is 2.28 which is lower than the stipulated mean of 2.50 which implies that for system and technology skills, teachers to a very low extent did not develop the skills in their students.



**Table 6:** Mean and Standard Deviations for the Aspect of Interpersonal Skills

| Interpersonal Skills                            | Mean | StD  | Decision     |
|-------------------------------------------------|------|------|--------------|
| 1. Ability to Participate as a member of a team | 3.20 | 0.90 | Large extent |
| 2. Ability to teach others                      | 2.96 | 0.80 | Large extent |
| 3. Ability to Serve customers                   | 3.02 | 0.79 | Large extent |
| 4. Ability to lead                              | 3.51 | 0.63 | Large extent |
| 5. Ability to Negotiate                         | 2.73 | 0.82 | Large extent |
| 6. Ability to work with diversity of people     | 3.21 | 0.78 | Large extent |

Overall Mean = 3.11

Table 6 shows that the responses of teachers on the extent to which they developed interpersonal skills in students. The item with the highest mean item for aspect of Interpersonal Skills is 'Ability to lead' with (Mean = 3.51, SD = 0.63). 'Ability to work with diversity of people' has a (Mean = 3.21, SD 0.78) and 'Ability to participate as a member of a team' (Mean = 3.20, SD = 0.90). 'Ability to Negotiate' has the lowest mean score (Mean = 2.73, SD = 0.82). The finding here implies that the aspect of 'interpersonal skills is developed in students to a large extent.

**Table 7:** Mean and Standard Deviations for the Aspect of Information Skills

| Information Skills                         | Mean | StD  | Decision     |
|--------------------------------------------|------|------|--------------|
| 1. Acquire and evaluate information        | 3.36 | 0.91 | Large extent |
| 2. Organizes and maintain information      | 2.64 | 0.73 | Large extent |
| 3. Interprets and communicates information | 3.13 | 0.84 | Large extent |
| 4. Uses computer to process information    | 2.77 | 0.78 | Large extent |

Overall Mean = 2.85

Table 7 shows that the item with the highest mean score for aspect of Information Skills is 'Acquire and evaluate information' with (Mean = 3.36, SD = 0.91). This is followed by 'Interprets and communicates information' (Mean = 3.13, SD 0.84) and 'Use computer to process information' (Mean = 2.64, SD = 0.73). The item 'Organizes and maintain information' has the lowest mean score (Mean = 2.64, SD = 0.78). The finding implies that 'Information Skills' development is at large extent developed in business students.

**Table 8:** Mean and Standard Deviations for the Aspect of Personal Skills

| Personal Quality                    | Mean | StD  | Decision     |
|-------------------------------------|------|------|--------------|
| 1. Responsibility                   | 3.60 | 0.62 | Large extent |
| 2. Self confidence                  | 3.22 | 0.87 | Large extent |
| 3. Sociability                      | 2.92 | 0.47 | Large extent |
| 4. Self-management                  | 3.24 | 0.69 | Large extent |
| 5. Honesty                          | 3.29 | 0.89 | Large extent |
| 6. Punctuality and efficiency       | 3.37 | 0.82 | Large extent |
| 7. Adaptable and Flexible           | 3.22 | 0.68 | Large extent |
| 8. Self-control                     | 3.27 | 0.80 | Large extent |
| 9. Good work attitude               | 3.21 | 0.95 | Large extent |
| 10. Own ideas and respond to others | 2.72 | 0.83 |              |

Overall Mean = 3.11



Table 8 shows that the item with the highest mean score for aspect of Personal Quality, was 'Responsibility' with (Mean = 3.60, SD = 0.62). Respondents also indicated high level skill developed in students in terms of 'Punctuality and Efficiency' (Mean = 3.37, SD 0.82) and 'Honesty' (Mean = 3.29, SD = 0.62). The item 'Own ideas and respond to others' has the lowest mean score (Mean = 2.72, SD = 0.83). The finding showed that teachers develop employability skills in students to a large extent in the aspect of personal quality skills..

### Research Question 3:

To what extent do teachers expose business studies students to employability activities?

**Table 9:** Extent of Exposure of Business Studies Students to employability Activities

| S/N | Item description                                        | VLE      | LE      | LtE      | NA       | X    |
|-----|---------------------------------------------------------|----------|---------|----------|----------|------|
| 1   | Independent research project                            | 85 (420) | 60(180) | 40(80)   | 7(7)     | 3.16 |
| 2   | Visit to industries                                     | 70(280)  | 52(156) | 38(76)   | 32(32)   | 2.83 |
| 3   | Excursions and field trips                              | 35(140)  | 30(90)  | 72 (144) | 55(55)   | 2.23 |
| 4   | Lectures/seminars from Business Experts/ industrialists | 60(240)  | 47(141) | 50(100)  | 35(35)   | 2.69 |
| 5   | Careers seminars                                        | 69(276)  | 53(159) | 32(64)   | 38(38)   | 2.80 |
| 6   | Students talk-shows/debates                             | 68(272)  | 51(153) | 55(110)  | 19(19)   | 2.89 |
| 7   | Student oral/written presentations                      | 79(396)  | 65(195) | 40(80)   | 8(8)     | 3.54 |
| 8   | Laboratory work (word Processing)                       | 20(80)   | 42(126) | 24(48)   | 106(106) | 1.88 |
| 9   | Writing business reports                                | 68(272)  | 50(150) | 54(108)  | 20(20)   | 2.86 |
| 10  | Make Business Proposal                                  | 40(160)  | 30(90)  | 72(144)  | 50(50)   | 2.31 |

Keys: VLE = Very Large Extent; LE = Large Extent; LtE = Little Extent; NA = Not at All

Table 9 shows that items 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 9 had mean scores above mean criterion of 2.50 as follows: 3.16, 2.83, 2.69, 2.80, 2.89, 3.54 and 2.86 respectively while items 3, 8 and 10 had their mean below criterion of 2.50. This implies that students do not have enough exposure in the area of: 'Excursions and field trips, laboratory work and making business proposal' activities respectively.

### Discussion

The findings of study indicated that business studies teachers in the Federal Capital Territory are aware of employability skills required by employers. This finding implies that the teachers are up-to-date in the demands of employers.

In terms of basic skills, the 'mathematics' item is found to have a low mean score. Mathematics is an important element to carry out duty especially production works and works which involved calculations and technological tools. This finding is in line with the submission of De Leon and Borchers (1998), who noted that 'employers in Texas valued mathematic skills as the second most important skill where the skill was not provided by employers, yet it is strictly required in occupations. Also, Mitchell (2001) stated that 80.6% of employers pointed out that they needed workers with basic



mathematic skills. Northern Virginia Community College (2000) carried out a research and stressed that employer gives priority to mathematical skill and basic calculations when working such as the usage of mathematics in computer and calculator. As a result of the valuable importance of mathematics to business studies, teachers should ensure that this skill is developed in students to a very large extent.

On the 'thinking skills', ability to be creative' has the lowest mean score. Ability to be creative is truly significant to make quick decisions logically or to interpret something and making conclusion out of them. The conclusion done should be based on thinking as well as other related considerations as ability to be creative. Logical thinking is similar to critical thinking where the knowledge gained can help one with the ability to be creative. Aspect of 'resource or capability skills' showed that 'financial management' item has low mean score. Any business outfit revolves around finance. Financial management can be said to be the life wire of a business. For any business to thrive, financial management becomes the important feature. This submission agrees with Godfrey (1997) who recommended that financial management and business studies should be included in vocational program in order to expose students to the business and industrial world.

In the aspect of system and technology all the items had mean within the range of little extent. This result is not surprising as most of our schools today are bedeviled with lack of adequate instructional materials like information and communication technology tools. It would be difficult for the teachers to develop system and technology skills in the students where these tools are not available in the schools. This finding is in agreement with the report of De Leon and Borchers (1998) noted that 80% of employers mentioned that the application of technologies to carry out duties is highly required. In addition, Yahya Buntat (2004) stated that the application of technologies, tools and systems in work is considered important and required by the industry. As such, teachers in business studies are required to develop this skill in their students.

The aspect of 'interpersonal skills', the item, 'ability to teach others' has the lowest mean score. This implies that an employee in a business organization requires the ability to teach others that, sharing knowledge with subordinates and even the boss is very important in any occupations.

In terms of the aspect of informational skills, 'organizes and maintains information' item has the lowest mean score. Ability to organize and maintain information is widely used in management, because information is said to be power. The success of most business organizations depends largely on the ability to manage information and keep what is confidential as such. This skill need to be improved upon by the teachers in the development of employability skills in the students. Zolingen (2000) reported that skillful employees stated that the key to successful work is the ability to protect information.

As for the aspect of personal quality, the item, 'own ideas and respond to others' has the lowest meanscore. The ability to bring out ideas and be able to respond to others either in giving answers to questions or being able to respond to issues about the organization that will better the organization needs to be developed in the business studies students in preparation for the world of work.

The study also revealed that of the 10 business activities to which the business teachers are expected to expose the business students to while in school, three of the activities had their mean score below 2.50 criterion set which implies that the students' exposure is to a little extent. The activities include: laboratory work, excursions and field trips and making business proposals need to be





improved upon to enable the business studies students in training be open to practical aspects of learning. This finding may not be far from inadequate instructional materials and inadequate fund for the procurement of required equipment and needed tools for the required activities.

### **Conclusions**

The study found that business studies teachers to a large extent to develop employability skills in the senior secondary students in the Federal Capital Territory. The seven aspects of employability skills covered in this study, six of the aspects were at large extent of development in the students by the teachers. For the aspect of system and technology, the result showed that the extent of development of the skills in the students was at little extents. On activities to carried out by teachers to expose business studies students to employability skills in the process of teaching, the study found that the students were not engaged in laboratory work, excursions and field trips and making business proposal.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were put forward:  
Business Studies Teachers in the Federal Capital Territory should ensure they maintain and improve on their level of awareness on the employability skills in business studies  
Adequate provision of technological tools needed for hands-on teaching and learning in the schools that will enable the teachers to develop the required employability skills in the students should be made.  
Adequate instructional materials should be provided to enable business studies teachers develop employability skills in the students.  
Funds should be made available to business studies teachers to conduct excursion to business cites and industry.  
Teachers should intensify the development of employability skills in business studies aspect of mathematics skills.

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