

COOPERATIVE VOCATIONAL EDUCATION MODEL FOR ENHANCING EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS OF BUSINESS EDUCATION GRADUATES IN EDO AND OGUN STATES

¹Bamidele Esther ADEYANJU ²Victor Imuetinyan IGBINEDION

¹Department of Vocational and Technical Education University of Benin, Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria, adeyanju.oluwabamidele@gmail.com (08039248328)
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0009-1503-6755>

²Department of Vocational and Technical Education University of Benin, Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria, victor.igbinedion@uniben.edu (08056014291)
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0004-1506-9200>

Abstract

The study examined cooperative vocational education as a model for enhancing employability skills of business education graduates in Edo and Ogun States. Five research questions were answered and three hypotheses were tested. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The population of the study which comprised 119 business education graduates from the University of Benin, Benin City, Edo State and Tai Solarin University of Education, Ijagun, Ogun State was completely used because it was manageable. A structured questionnaire of 35 items was used to collect the data. The instrument was validated and the reliability coefficient of .91 was obtained using Cronbach's alpha formula. The data collected were analyzed using mean (\bar{x}) and standard deviation for the research questions and t-test to test the hypothesis. The findings of the study revealed that cooperative vocational education model will enhance the acquisition of core business skills; working with tools and technology skills; dependability and reliability skills; customer focus skills; and decision management skills to a high extent among business education graduates. It was therefore recommended that cooperative vocational education model should be adopted or adapted in business education programme in Nigeria.

Keywords: employability, skills, cooperative vocational education model

Introduction

With the persistent increase in the rate of unemployment in Nigeria, especially among the youthful population, it is imperative for the government to look for means of keeping its youths employed. It is equally essential for graduates to possess employability skills for them to be employable and even become employers of labour (Mainga, Daniel, & Alamil, 2022). The level of development of a nation to an extent depends on the production of a knowledgeable, dynamic, and skilled workforce. The Federal Government of Nigeria (2013) in the National Policy on Education (NPE) emphasized education to be an instrument per excellence for effective national development. As part of the strategy of education that will enhance the acquisition of the skills needed for both national and individual development, vocational and technical education was introduced in Nigeria, of which business education is a subset. According to National University Commission (2022), business education at the university level is defined as a specialised profession that equips students with the knowledge, abilities, and competence necessary to advance in office occupations and become employable. It also includes pedagogical skills for teaching business subjects at various educational levels and the ability to work for oneself or as an employer of labour.

The FGN (2013) indicates that the goals of business education are embedded in vocational and technical education and they are to:

- provide trained manpower in the applied sciences, technology, and business particularly at craft, advanced craft and technical levels;

- provide the technical knowledge and vocational skills necessary for agriculture, commercial, and economic development;
- give training and impart the necessary skills to individual who shall be self-reliant economically.

The major concern is that these goals have not been fully achieved. There have been complaints by the employers of labour that Nigerian graduates including business education graduates do not possess the required employability skills needed to fit into the various jobs available (Aluko, 2014; Hossain, Manzurul, Mohamme, & Amirus, 2020). There seems to be employability skills gap among business education graduates in Nigeria. This may be traceable to many factors which have led to many other challenges. In a nutshell, there is a disparity between industry needs and vocational institutions' provisions, making the graduates to be perceived as “half-baked” (Pitan & Adedeji, 2012). Apart from funding, institutions and industries need cooperation in several areas. Some of these areas include planning and development of curricula for business education, policy making, development of programme contents, development of specific employability skills expected of the students upon graduation, and supervision of students on workexperience programme (Behle, 2020). A planned cooperation between industries and vocational institutions is very important for the smooth running of business education programme in Nigeria and the employability of its graduates. This could be achieved through cooperative vocational education.

Cooperative education is a method of instruction that enables students to combine academic classroom instruction (school-based learning component) with occupational instruction through learning on-the-job (work-based learning component) in a career/academic area of choice. A cooperative education plan is to formally integrate students' academic study with productive work experience in cooperating employer organizations (Osinen & Nwoji, 2005). Cooperative education is a partnership among students, educational institutions and employers, with specified responsibilities for each party. The major characteristics of the programme include:

- formal recognition by the school as an educational strategy integrating classroom learning and progressive work experiences, with a constructive academic relationship between teaching faculty and cooperative education faculty or administrators;
- structure for multiple work experiences in formalized sequence with study leading to degree completion of an academic program; and
- work experiences, which include both an appropriate learning environment and productive work; and so on (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2014, p. 4).

To this end, cooperative education is a method of instruction which can be applied to a variety of educational purposes. Goma (2000) posited that when this cooperative method of instruction is applied to vocational education programme, it is referred to as “Cooperative Vocational Education”. Cooperative vocational education programme provides a world of work environment for students to apply and augment classroom skills and knowledge acquired. This can bridge the employability skills gap of business education graduates as people generally often find it uneasy to relate abstract teachings to real-life situations. Therefore, the teaching and learning process is better when students see theory in operation and also have opportunity to practice what they have learned in the classroom almost immediately with relevant and modern tools and equipment. This also gives the industries opportunity to introduce to the students the necessary skills expected of them upon graduation to make them employable. To enhance employability skills, cooperative vocational education model is needed.

Cooperative vocational education model has an edge over other forms of partnership between educational institutions and industries that already exist in Nigeria. Examples are students Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES), Industrial Training (IT), among others. SIWES and IT for instance expose students to some work experience but this is usually after the whole programme of study in the classroom for the session(s) is over while cooperative vocational education programme exposes students to the world of work and classroom experience concurrently on the chosen field. The students get exposed to the employability skills by observation and application of concrete experience while taking part in the activities of the industry.

Moreover, SIWES and IT only have duration of few months (usually four months for Polytechnics and Colleges of Education students and six months for University students) for the work experience which is done at a go compared to cooperative vocational education model that has equal time for classroom instruction and workplace instruction.

However, cooperative education model involves students alternating same time in the traditional academic semesters with semesters spent working full-time in their chosen field (Grubb & Villeneuve 1995) and the students complete between three and five semesters prior to graduation which is not so in SIWES and IT programmes. Though the concept of cooperative vocational education model has not received adequate emphasis in the Nigerian educational system, it can be an alternative to the current Students Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES) as SIWES is confronted with some problems. For instance, many students don't take the scheme serious and only a few employers are interested in employing the students not even as 'learning workers' but as 'producing workers'. As a result, little attention is paid to the training value of the scheme to the students (Orikpe, 2013). This has made business education graduates not to still possess the employability skills needed.

Employability Skills

Jackson (2013), National Network of Business and Industry Associations - NNBIA, (2014), and Bassah and Noor (2023) identified some employability skills that are relevant to businesses. These include core business skills, working with tools and technology skills, dependability and reliability skills, customer focus skills, and decision management skills. Core business skills entail basic knowledge in numeracy, technology, and communication. *Numeracy* involves adding, subtracting, multiplying, dividing, and translating practical problems into useful numerical expressions. *Technology* involves using information technology and related applications to convey and retrieve information; navigation and file management; understanding common computer terminologies; internet and e-mail; navigating the internet to find information; and sending and retrieving electronic mail (Ile & Ementa, 2016). Communication entails the ability to listen and relate to other people; and to act upon key information/instructions. It basically involves reading and writing. *Reading* involves the ability to read and comprehend work-related instructions, policies, and governmental regulations. *Writing* involves the ability to prepare written materials using correct wording and communicate thoughts and other written information in a logical, organized, and coherent manner (NNBIA, 2014). Core business skills are needed for employability in this era where there is high level of competition for the few jobs available.

Working with tools and technology skills entail selecting, using and maintaining tools and technology to facilitate work activity; identifying, selecting and using appropriate tools and technological solutions to frequently encountered problems; and carefully considering which tools or technological solutions are appropriate for a given job, and consistently choosing the best tool or technological solution for the problem at hand (NNBIA, 2014). Information and communication technology is embedded in working with tools and technology skills. ICT has to do with the use of modern technology for communication and sending/receiving messages. Ile and Ementa (2016) pointed out that the acquisition of ICT skills involves the ability of an individual to competently and proficiently manipulate technological devices for effective information gathering, organization, processing, and retrieval. When business education graduates possess these skills, they stand out and are sought out in the crowd. It is not enough to learn them in theory without working with them in real job experience.

Dependability and reliability skills form part of the personal skills that an employable person should possess. These skills have to do with displaying responsible behaviours at work; behaving consistently, predictably and reliably; fulfilling obligations, completing assignments and meeting deadlines; following written and verbal directions; complying with organization's rules, policies and procedures; and demonstrating regular and punctual attendance. Personal character is a skill that should be developed on its own and this cannot be taught or learnt in the classroom. It also involves having honesty, integrity and personal ethics (Bloom & Kitagawa, 1999). In cooperative vocational education model, as students engage in productive work

experiences, mentoring is directly or indirectly taking place. Students have tendency to learn good characters from disciplined people they meet on the job and emulate their way of going about their jobs. Application of cooperative vocational education model has the tendency of enhancing these skills in graduates of business education programme.

Customers focus skills entails the ability to develop good customer orientation for effective operation; ability to persuade customers and stakeholder as expected; ability to organize customer meetings to improve their buying behaviour; establishment of linkages with other businesses and stakeholders for mutual learning and collaborative undertaking; having genuine regards for customers; recognizing the behavioural style of customers; understanding the basic things which motivate customers. Decision management skills also involves creativity, information management and decision making; identifying and prioritizing the key issues involved to facilitate the decision making process; anticipating the consequences of decisions; involving people appropriately in decisions that may impact them; and quickly responding with a back-up plan if a decision goes amiss (Jackson, 2013; NNBA, 2014; Bassah & Noor, 2023). It involves the ability to understand a problem by breaking it down into smaller parts, and identifying the key issues, implications and identifying solutions. A business is built on the problems (needs and wants) of customers and without them, there will be no business at all (Ezenwafor & Olaniyi, 2017). Cooperative vocational education can be a link to acquiring these skills. This is well illustrated and supported by Kolb's experiential learning theory.

Kolb's experiential learning theory is one of the most familiar learning theories fit for cooperative education. David Kolb (1984), reviewed in 2014 is a holistic perspective that combines experience, perception, cognition, and behaviour. The theory is called 'experiential learning theory' to emphasize the central role that experience plays in the learning process. The components of the learning cycle and the learning styles propounded in this theory - Concrete Experience (CE), Abstract Conceptualization (AC), Reflective Observation (RO) and Active Experimentation (AE) explain it all. According to Kolb (1984), Concrete experience is what is needed as an outcome of any learning process and not abstract experience. In cooperative vocational education model, abstract conceptualization happens in the classroom, that is, the concepts to be learned are abstractly taught in the classroom. Reflective observation and active experimentation which will eventually lead to concrete experience happen outside the classroom, that is, in the industries (real world of work). At these different levels in the learning cycle, the students exhibit different learning styles (accommodating, diverging, assimilating and converging). Therefore, when cooperative vocational education model is applied to business education, the recipients could gather some real work experiences and employability skills that will make them employable and relevant in the world of work and this will give them a chance over those who did not have the experience.

When classroom instruction is connected to work experience through on-the-job training in the industries, corroborated by the students' organizations (VSO) as the students brainstorm and work in teams, it would give room for interaction and team spirit among students. All work together in the same programme with the student-learner at the centre to enhance employability skills of the graduates of the programme. This is illustrated in Fig. 1.

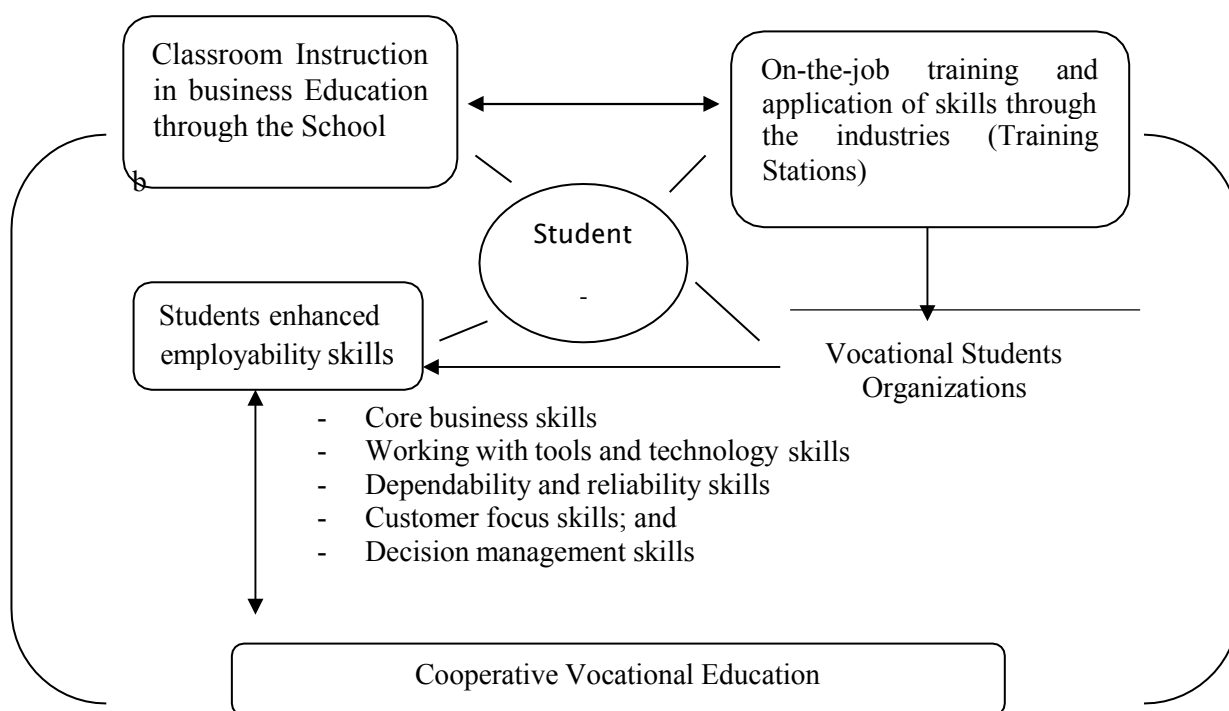


Figure 1: Schema of Cooperative Vocational Education Model and Employability Skills Interrelations (Adapted from Ukoha (2008), Jackson (2013), & NNBIA (2014))

As illustrated in figure 1, cooperative vocational education model for business education programme encompasses the classroom instruction received in the institution (school) corroborated by on-the-job training and application of skills acquired through work experience in the training station (industry), supported by interaction in the vocational students organizations, with the student-learner at the center, leading to the development and enhancement of employability skills in the students which will make them employable upon graduation. Cooperative vocational education model is a learner-centered model relying upon a tripartite partnership between an institution, the student, and an employer.

Therefore, the aforementioned skills cannot be completely learned in the classroom. It is through alliance between the institutions and the industries through cooperative vocational education that the students can acquire them. Jackson and Susan (2019) opined that students should be encouraged to draw on work experiences when articulating achievements and capabilities to enhance employability. The level of employability skills possessed distinguishes an applicant from the crowd. The degree to which a business educator possesses these skills determines his/her relevance in the world of work. The ultimate goal of any vocational and technical institution is skill development (Iyekekpolo, 2016). Achieving this goal in our institutions in the country at the moment is far below actualization. Based on the foregoing, the study sought to know whether cooperative vocational education model can enhance employability skills of business education graduates in Nigeria, and to what extent.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study:

1. To what extent does cooperative vocational education model enhance the acquisition of core business skills of business education graduates for employability?
2. To what extent does cooperative vocational education model enhance the acquisition of working with tools and technology skills of business education graduates for employability?

3. To what extent does cooperative vocational education model enhance the acquisition of dependability and reliability skills of business education graduates for employability?
4. To what extent does cooperative vocational education model enhance the acquisition of customer focus skills of business education graduates for employability?
5. To what extent does cooperative vocational education model enhance the acquisition of decision management skills of business education graduates for employability?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

1. There is no significant difference in the mean responses between male and female business education graduates with regards to using cooperative vocational education model to enhance employability skills.
2. There is no significant difference in the mean responses between business education graduates in federal university and state university with regards to using cooperative vocational education model to enhance employability skills.
3. There is no significant difference in the mean responses between business education lecturers and the post graduates students with regards to using cooperative vocational education model to enhance employability skills.

Methods

The study employed a descriptive survey design. The population for the study was made up of the whole 25 business education lecturers and 94 business education post-graduate students from the University of Benin, Benin City, Edo State and Tai Solarin University of Education, Ijagun, Ogun State. The lecturers and post-graduate students were used to get business education graduates in their cluster. The entire population of 119 was used for the study since it is manageable, hence, a census. The instrument used for data collection for the study was a structured questionnaire developed by the researchers. The instrument was made up of two sections: A and B. Section A focused on respondents' bio-data which include gender, location, and university ownership while Section B contained thirty-five (35) items to elicit opinions on the subject matter. The items were raised from each of the research questions where the respondents were requested to select the most appropriate options and the breakdown is as follows: RQ1 Items 1-7, RQ2 Items 8 -17, RQ3 Items 18-24, RQ4 Items 25-29, and RQ5 Items 30-35. Responses were on a 4-point rating scale.

The instrument for data collection was validated. The Cronbach's alpha method was used to establish the reliability of the instrument and a co-efficient of .91 was obtained which shows that the instrument is reliable. The data collected was analyzed using mean (\bar{x}), standard deviation, and t-test statistics. The mean was used to answer the research questions, while the t-test was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. Any calculated mean (\bar{x}) value equal to or greater than 2.50 was regarded as high extent while any calculated mean (\bar{x}) value less than 2.50 was regarded as low extent. On the basis of hypotheses, the probability value (p) was used. Where the p -value is less than or equal to 0.05, the null hypothesis was not retained, otherwise, it was retained.

Results

Research Question One:

To what extent does cooperative vocational education model enhance the acquisition of core business skills of business education graduates for employability?

Table 1:
Respondents' Mean and Standard Deviation on Cooperative Vocational Education for Acquisition of Core Business Skills for Employability

S/N	Item Statements	Mean	SD	Remark
1	Cooperative vocational education (CVE) model will equip business education graduates (its recipients) with ability to translate practical problems into useful numerical expressions	3.31	.653	HE
2	CVE model will equip its recipients with ability to use information technology (e.g computer, internet, e-mail, etc) to convey and retrieve information	3.35	.595	HE
3	It will enhance ability to use data (including charts, graphs and tables) to support evidence or demonstrate a point	3.16	.686	HE
4	It will enhance ability to read and comprehend work-related instructions, policies and governmental regulations	3.24	.708	HE
5	CVE model will equip its recipients with ability to prepare written materials using correct wording	3.15	.707	HE
6	It will foster the ability to communicate thoughts in a logical, organized and coherent manner employability via CVE	3.25	.673	HE
7	CVE model will equip its recipients with the ability to write in a factual manner in a tone appropriate for target audience	3.11	.761	HE
Cluster		3.22	.423	HE

Note. HE – high extent

Table 1 shows the result of the extent to which cooperative vocational education model enhances the acquisition of core business skills among business education graduates for employability. The mean responses range from 3.11 to 3.35, while the standard deviation range from .595 to .761. The mean responses of the seven items of core business skills correspond to high extent. The standard deviation are relatively not wide apart, which implies that the responses are relatively clustered around the mean. The cluster of 3.22 indicates that cooperative vocational education model enhances acquisition of core business skills to a high extent among business education graduates for employability.

Research Question Two:

To what extent does cooperative vocational education model enhance the acquisition of working with tools and technology skills of business education graduates for employability?

Table 2:
Respondents’ Mean and Standard Deviation on Cooperative Vocational Education for Acquisition of Working with Tools and Technology Skills for Employability

S/N	Item Statements	Mean	SD	Remark
8	CVE model will equip its recipients with skills in selecting tools and technology (e.g computer set, mouse, applications, etc) to facilitate work activity	3.42	.623	HE
9	CVE model will enhance ability to identify, select and use appropriate tools and technological solutions to frequently encountered problems	3.14	.702	HE
10	Ability to use and maintain tools and technology to facilitate work activity will be acquired via CVE	3.25	.714	HE
11	It will facilitate the ability to carefully consider which technological solutions are appropriate for a given job	3.11	.745	HE
12	It will enhance the ability to consistently choose the best tool or technological solution for the problem at hand	3.21	.616	HE
13	CVE model will enhance ability to use computer tools (e.g scroll balls, a mouse and dialogue boxes, etc) to work within the computer operating system	3.24	.708	HE
14	CVE model will equip its recipients with the ability to access and switch between applications and files of interest	3.29	.675	HE
15	It will equip its recipients with the ability to adhere to standard conventions for safeguarding privacy and security	3.16	.686	HE
16	CVE model will equip its recipients with the ability to open and configure standard browsers	3.10	.764	HE
17	Ability to use searches, hypertext references and transfer protocols (enter URLs) will be enhanced via CVE model	3.07	.828	HE
Cluster		3.20	.380	HE

Note. HE – high extent

Table 2 shows the result of the extent to which cooperative vocational education model enhances the acquisition of working with tools and technology skills among business education graduates for employability. The mean responses range from 3.07 to 3.42, while the standard deviation range from .616 to .823. The mean responses of the ten items of working with tools and technology skills correspond to high extent. The standard deviation are relatively not wide apart, which implies that the responses are relatively clustered around the mean. The cluster of 3.20 indicates that cooperative vocational education model will enhance acquisition of working with tools and technology skills to a high extent among business education graduates for employability.

Research Question Three:

To what extent does cooperative vocational education model enhance the acquisition of dependability and reliability skills of business education graduates for employability?

Table 3:
Respondents’ Mean and Standard Deviation on Cooperative Vocational Education for Acquisition of Dependability and Reliability Skills for Employability

S/N	Item Statements	Mean	SD	Remark
18	CVE model will enhance its recipients’ ability to behave consistently and reliably at work	3.39	.604	HE
19	Ability to fulfill obligations and complete assignments will be learned through CVE model	3.11	.662	HE
20	Ability to follow written and verbal directions of the organization will be acquired through CVE model	3.13	.710	HE
21	CVE model will enhance its recipients’ ability to comply with organization’s rules and policies	3.25	.702	HE
22	CVE model will enhance ability to demonstrate regular and punctual attendance at work	3.21	.658	HE
23	Ability to set goals and priorities in work and personal life will be acquired through CVE model	3.16	.699	HE
24	Ability to be accountable for actions taken will be acquired through CVE model	3.18	.719	HE
	Cluster	3.21	.404	HE

Note. HE – high extent

Table 3 shows the result of the extent to which cooperative vocational education model enhances the acquisition of dependability and reliability skills among business education graduates for employability. The mean responses range from 3.11 to 3.39, while the standard deviation range from .604 to .719. The mean responses of the seven items of dependability and reliability skills correspond to high extent. The standard deviation are relatively not wide apart, which implies that the responses are relatively clustered around the mean. The cluster of 3.21 indicates that cooperative vocational education model will enhance acquisition of dependability and reliability skills to a high extent among business education graduates for employability.

Research Question Four:

To what extent does cooperative vocational education model enhance the acquisition of customer-focus skills of business education graduates for employability?

Table 4:
Respondents’ Mean and Standard Deviation on Cooperative Vocational Education for Acquisition of Customer Focus Skills for Employability

S/N	Item Statements	Mean	SD	Remark
25	CVE model will equip its recipients with ability to actively look for ways to identify market demands and meet customers’ needs	3.31	.777	HE
26	It will enhance ability to organize customers’ meetings to improve their buying behaviour	3.20	.654	HE
27	CVE will enhance ability to provide personalized service with prompt and efficient responses to meet the requests and concern of customers	3.22	.750	HE
28	Ability to be courteous when dealing with internal and external customers will be acquired through CVE model	3.18	.767	HE
29	Ability to add value to customers’ satisfaction will be acquired through CVE model	3.17	.690	HE
	Cluster	3.21	.498	HE

Note. HE – high extent

Table 4 shows the result of the extent to which cooperative vocational education model enhances the acquisition of customer focus skills among business education graduates for employability. The mean responses range from 3.17 to 3.31, while the standard deviation range from .654 to .777. The mean responses of the five items of customer focus skills correspond to high extent. The standard deviation are relatively not wide apart, which implies that the responses are relatively clustered around the mean. The cluster of 3.21 indicates that cooperative vocational education model will enhance acquisition of customer focus skills to a high extent among business education graduates for employability.

Research Question 5:

To what extent does cooperative vocational education model enhance the acquisition of decision management skills of business education graduates for employability?

Table 5:
Respondents’ Mean and Standard Deviation on Cooperative Vocational Education for Acquisition of decision Management Skills for Employability

S/N	Item Statements	Mean	SD	Remark
30	Ability to identify key issues involved to facilitate the decision making process will be acquired via CVE model	3.38	.657	HE
31	Ability to prioritize key issues involved to facilitate the decision making process will be acquired via CVE model	3.22	.648	HE
32	CVE model will enhance the ability to anticipate the consequences of decisions in workplace settings	3.21	.631	HE
33	Ability to involve people appropriately in decisions that may impact them will be acquired via CVE model	3.13	.723	HE
34	Ability to quickly respond with a back-up plan if a decision goes amiss will be acquired via CVE model	3.14	.664	HE
35	Ability to evaluate progress about the particular decision will be acquired via CVE model	3.09	.771	HE
Cluster		3.19	.434	HE

Note. HE – high extent

Table 5 shows the result of the extent to which cooperative vocational education model enhances the acquisition of decision management skills among business education graduates for employability. The mean responses range from 3.09 to 3.38, while the standard deviation range from .631 to .771. The mean responses of the six items of decision management skills correspond to high extent. The standard deviation are relatively not wide apart, which implies that the responses are relatively clustered around the mean. The cluster of 3.19 indicates that cooperative vocational education model will enhance acquisition of decision management skills to a high extent among business education graduates for employability.

Hypothesis One:

There is no significant difference in the mean responses between male and female business education graduates with regards to using cooperative vocational education model to enhance employability skills.

Table 6:
The t-test Analysis on Cooperative Vocational Education Model for Employability by Gender

Gender	N	Mean	SD	Df	T	P	Decision
Male	49	3.18	.312	112	-.830	.409	Retain
Female	65	3.23	.366				

P>0.05

Table 6 shows the t-test analysis of the extent to which cooperative vocational education model enhances employability skills of business education graduates based on the respondents' gender. The aggregate mean responses for male and female respondents are 3.18 and 3.23 respectively. Correspondently, the aggregate standard deviations are .312 and .366. The t-value of -.830 is not significant when p-value is .409, at .05 level of significant. Thus the null hypothesis is retained. This means that there is no significant difference between male and female business education graduates with regards to using cooperative vocational education model to enhance employability skills.

Hypothesis Two:

There is no significant difference in the mean responses between business education graduates in federal university and state university with regards to using cooperative vocational education model to enhance employability skills.

Table 7
The t-test Analysis on Cooperative Vocational Education for Employability by Ownership of institutions

Ownership	N	Mean	SD	Df	T	P	Decision
Federal	56	3.25	.313	112	1.292	.199	Retain
State	57	3.17	.372				

P>0.05

Table 7 shows the t-test analysis of the extent to which cooperative vocational education model enhances employability skills of business education graduates based on ownership of institutions. The aggregate mean responses for respondents in the Federal and State Universities are 3.25 and 3.17 respectively. Correspondently, the aggregate standard deviations are .313 and .372. The t-value of 1.292 is not significant when p-value is .199, at .05 level of significant. Thus the null hypothesis is retained. This means that there is no significant difference between business education graduates in federal university and state university with regards to using cooperative vocational education model to enhance employability skills.

Hypothesis Three:

There is no significant difference in the mean responses between business education lecturers and post-graduates students with regards to using cooperative vocational education model to enhance employability skills.

Table 8:
The t-test Analysis on Cooperative Vocational Education for Employability by Status

Status	N	Mean	SD	df	T	P	Decision
Lecturers	20	3.26	.313	112	.770	.443	Retain
Students	94	3.19	.372				

P>0.05

Table 8 shows the t-test analysis of the extent to which cooperative vocational education model enhances employability skills of business education graduates based on the respondents' status. The aggregate mean responses for lecturers and students are 3.26 and 3.19 respectively. Correspondently, the aggregate standard deviations are .313 and .372. The t-value of .770 is not significant when p-value is .443, at .05 level of significant. Thus the null hypothesis is retained. This means that there is no significant difference between business education lecturers and the business education post graduates students with regards to using cooperative vocational education model to enhance employability skills.

Discussion of Findings

The findings from research question one which sought to determine the extent to which cooperative vocational education model enhances the acquisition of core business skills of business education graduates for employability revealed that cooperative vocational education model will enhance the acquisition of core business skills to a high extent. This is in agreement with the findings of Ukoha (2008) who opined that there is need to foster and maintain close partnership between school and community through cooperative vocational education model to enable the students acquire attitudes, skills and necessary knowledge needed for chosen career and employment opportunities. Core business skills are one of these skills which can be acquired in real jobs under actual working conditions. This also concurs with Jackson (2013) who noted core business skills as one of the employability skills that can be acquired through CVE. There is a clear recognition that quality, relevant, and the most up-to-date learning occurs in the workplace where what is current is being adopted and incorporated into the daily work role. Going by the finding, if business education programme adopts cooperative vocational education as an educational model, the business education students will be prepared for meaningful employment, whether paid employment or self employment. The experience gathered during the classroom instruction at the training station (on-the-job instruction in industries) will enhance the students' development and acquisition of these employability skills.

From research question two which sought to determine the extent to which cooperative vocational education model enhances the acquisition of working with tools and technology skills of business education graduates for employability, the findings revealed that cooperative vocational education model will enhance the acquisition of working with tools and technology skills to a high extent. This is in agreement with the findings of Etonyeaku and Ezeji (2013) that cooperative vocational education will result in the production of graduates with skills, attitude and knowledge for self and paid employment in which working with tools and technology skills is one. This also agrees perfectly with the North Carolina Cooperative Education Policies and Procedure Manual (2000) which stated technology skills as one of the skills that can be acquired through CVE. This finding also agrees with NNBA (2014) which stated that working with tools and technology skills entail selecting, using and maintaining tools and technology to facilitate work activity which can be acquired through CVE. The acquisition of these skills will enable graduates of business education to function effectively in the current highly competitive environment and strong market forces to turn business problems into business opportunities (Bassah & Noor, 2023). This is made possible through CVE model as the students interact with the permanent workers already in the industries using various modern tools and technology in the industries to do some work.

The findings from research question three which sought to determine the extent to which cooperative vocational education model enhances the acquisition of dependability and reliability skills for business

education graduates' employability revealed that cooperative vocational education model will enhance the acquisition of dependability and reliability skills to a high extent. This is in agreement with the findings of Canale and Duwart (1999) and Bassah and Noor (2023) who asserted that employability skills also involve honesty, integrity and personal ethics. No matter how hard an individual may work or how many brilliant ideas he may display, if he does not possess some personal skills like dependability and reliability skills, his professional life will suffer. This emphasizes the need to acquire these personal skills for employability as revealed by this study.

For research question four which sought to determine the extent to which cooperative vocational education model enhances the acquisition of customer-focus skills for business education graduates' employability, the findings showed that cooperative vocational education model will enhance the acquisition of customer-focus skills to a high extent. A business is built on the problems (needs and wants) of customers and without these, there will be no business at all. This is in agreement with the findings of Ezenwafor and Olaniyi (2017) who revealed that human relation skills, innovative skills, and problem-solving skills were rated as highly needed by business education graduates, and all these skills are embedded in customer focus skills. This also concurs with NNBAI (2014) which revealed that Cooperative vocational education will enhance the acquisition of customer-focus skills.

The findings from research question five which sought to determine the extent to which cooperative vocational education model enhances the acquisition of decision management skills for business education graduates' employability showed that cooperative vocational education model will enhance the acquisition of decision management skills to a high extent. This is in concord with the findings of Etonyeaku and Ezeji (2013) who revealed that cooperative vocational education will result in the production of graduates with skills (of which decision management is part), attitude and knowledge for self and paid employment. Decision management skills involve critical thinking, understanding of the business, team spirit, decisiveness and courage. Also, this agrees perfectly with the NNBAI (2014) which noted decision management skills as one of the employability skills that can be acquired through CVE. This implies that developing cooperative vocational education model will help business education students during their years of study to gain more practical experience in decision management directly from the industry rather than just from their studies and workshop exercises. This experience will not only help them gain practical and applied experience in the workplace but will also help them obtain jobs in paid or self employment upon graduation.

Based on the hypotheses, hypothesis one revealed that there is no significant difference between male and female business education graduates with regards to using cooperative vocational education model to enhance employability skills. This shows that the responses of business education graduates to the use of cooperative vocational education model to enhance their employability skills is not influenced by gender. This implies that there is no discrepancy between male and female business education graduates in their perception about the ability of cooperative vocational education model to enhance their employability skills and their decision is not influenced by who they are.

From hypothesis two, the findings revealed that there is no significant difference between business education graduates in federal university and state university with regards to using cooperative vocational education model to enhance employability skills of business education graduates. This shows that the responses of these two sets of business education graduates to the use of cooperative vocational education model to enhance business graduates' employability skills are not influenced by the ownership of the institutions. It is evident therefore from the findings that both state and federal institutions in Edo and Ogun States have the same perception about the efficacy of CVE model in helping the students not just to take classes, but to take classes further, integrating their coursework with real-world experiences which will give them opportunity to acquire the relevant employability skills.

The findings of the study with regards to hypothesis three showed that there is no significant difference between business education lecturers and the business education post graduates students in Edo and Ogun

States, Nigeria with regards to using cooperative vocational education model to enhance employability skills. This shows that the responses to the use of cooperative vocational education model to enhance business education graduates' employability skills is not influenced by status. Both lecturers and students responded the same way. This also implies that the lecturers teaching the students and the students they are teaching agree that cooperative vocational education model will enhance the acquisition of various relevant employability skills of graduates of business education to a high extent.

Conclusion

The findings of this study have vividly revealed that cooperative vocational education model will enhance the employability skills of business education graduates in Edo and Ogun states of Nigeria to a high extent. Specifically, cooperative vocational education will enhance the acquisition of core business skills; working with tools and technology skills; dependability and reliability skills; customer focus skills; and decision management skills of business education graduates for employability. Therefore, the advocacy for this model is worthwhile.

Recommendations

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

1. Cooperative vocational education model should be adopted or adapted as a means of preparing business education students for employment as the programme will expose them to the employability skills needed to be employable or be an employer of labour. The model could be used as either a replacement to SIWES or improvement on SIWES
2. There should be proper synergy between government, educational institutions and industries to make cooperative vocational education model workable in Nigeria for the actualization of the goals and objectives of business education programme.

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