INFLUENCE OF INDUSTRIAL TRAINING PROGRAMME SKILLS ON THE EMPLOYABILITY OPPORTUNITY OF BUSINESS EDUCATION STUDENTS IN UNIVERSITIES IN EDO STATE

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A RESEARCH STUDY SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS EDUCATION, FACULTY OF VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION, UNIVERSITY OF BENIN, BENIN CITY IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF B.Sc (Ed) DEGREE IN BUSINESS EDUCATION

NOVEMBER 2025.

APPROVAL PAGE

I certify that this work was carried out by Afoke Esther EDJESA with Matriculation Number EDU2203682 in the Department of Business Education, Faculty of Vocational and Technical Education, University of Benin, Benin city, Edo State.

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DEDICATION

This research work is dedicated to Almighty God for His infinite love, mercy, grace and provisions through our my Project work.

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the influence of Industrial Training Programme (ITP) skills on the employability opportunities of Business Education students in universities in Edo State, Nigeria. Four research questions guided the study. The descriptive survey research design was adopted.

The population comprised 213 Business Education undergraduate students from the University of Benin (UNIBEN) and Ambrose Alli University (AAU), and because the population was manageable, a census was used. Data were collected using a self-structured questionnaire titled Influence of Industrial Training Programme Skills on Employability Opportunities of Business Education Students Questionnaire (IITPSEOBESQ). The instrument was validated by experts and reliability was established using Cronbach Alpha, yielding a coefficient of 0.70. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions.

Findings revealed that communication skills, interpersonal skills, information and communication technology (ICT) skills, and technical and vocational skills acquired during industrial training all influence the employability opportunities of Business Education students to a high extent. The study concluded that industrial training significantly enhances students' readiness for the labour market by equipping them with essential practical and soft skills needed for employment and career development. It was recommended that universities strengthen supervision of industrial training, improve partnerships with industries, and ensure students are placed in relevant organizations to enhance skill acquisition and employability outcomes.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

In the ever-evolving landscape of global education and economic development, the role of higher education has increasingly shifted from knowledge dissemination to preparing graduates for the demands of the workforce. In Nigeria, the unemployment rate among university graduates has raised concerns among policymakers, educators, and researchers alike (National Bureau of Statistics, 2023). A notable gap exists between the skills graduates possess and the requirements of employers. To bridge this divide, industrial training programmes, particularly in business education, are being emphasized as a tool for improving graduate employability.

Business Education, as a component of vocational and technical education, is a field of study that aims at equipping students with practical business skills, knowledge, and competencies needed for self-reliance and gainful employment. It combines theoretical instruction with practical skill development. However, traditional academic instruction alone has proven insufficient in preparing students for the dynamic demands of the labor market (Ekpenyong, 2016). This challenge has led to the incorporation of Industrial Training (IT) as a complementary component of the curriculum.

According to Titiloye (2022), Business Education is "the study of courses that are technology related and the acquisition of functional and practical skills required to function efficiently and effectively as employees or employers of labour" . According to

the National Universities Commission Core Curriculum Minimum Academic Standards (NUC CCMAS, 2023), Business Education is "a specialized profession designed to provide students with knowledge, skills and competence leading to employability and advancement in office occupations, pedagogical skills in teaching business subjects at different levels of the educational system as well as self-employment or being an employer of labour."

Industrial Training Programmes (ITPs) have emerged as a strategic intervention aimed at bridging the gap between theory and practice in higher education. In Nigeria, the Students

Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES), coordinated by the Industrial Training Fund (ITF) and supervised by the National Universities Commission (NUC), is a compulsory component of many undergraduate programmes, including business education which ensures that students gain hands-on experience before graduation. It is designed to expose students to real-life work environments, enabling them to develop professional competencies, understand workplace culture, and apply theoretical knowledge to practical situations (Industrial Training Fund [ITF], 2013).

According to SIWES Overview (2023), Industrial Training is a skills training programme that exposes students to industrial work environments they are likely to encounter after graduation, allowing them to familiarize themselves with handling equipment and machinery not usually available in academic institutions. According to Okpor and Hassan (2012); ITF (2004), Students' Industrial Work Experience Scheme

(SIWES) is a structured, supervised training intervention based on defined learning and professional objectives, designed to develop students' occupational competencies and bridge the gap between theoretical education and actual workplace demands.

The Industrial Training Programme (ITP), often implemented through the Students' Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES) in Nigeria, is designed to achieve the following aims: To bridge the gap between theoretical classroom learning and practical work situations in industry, commerce, and public service, to equip students with relevant technical, vocational, and professional skills required for effective job performance after graduation, to expose students to modern tools, equipment, technology, and work processes used in industry, to enhance students' employability by developing workplace competencies, problem-solving ability, and adaptability, to foster professional attitudes such as punctuality, teamwork, responsibility, and adherence to workplace ethics, to promote entrepreneurship by giving students practical insights into running and managing business operation.

In line with its aims, the objectives of the Industrial Training Programme are: to provide students with an opportunity to apply the knowledge and skills acquired in their academic programmes to real-life work settings, to help students gain hands-on experience in the use of tools, machines, software, and other resources relevant to their field of study, to develop students' technical competencies and improve their problem-solving abilities in professional environments, to build soft skills such as communication, interpersonal relations, time management, and decision-making, to facilitate networking

opportunities between students and industry professionals, thereby increasing future employment prospects, to prepare students to adapt quickly to changing work environments and technological innovations after graduation, to encourage a positive work culture through exposure to organizational structure, workflow, and corporate ethics.

The industrial training experience allows business education students to acquire a variety of hard and soft skills that are critical to their employability. Some of which includes; Communication skills, interpersonal skills, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) skills, and Technical and vocational skills amongst others.

Communication Skills helps students to develop the ability to write professional memos, business letters, and reports, as well as engage in workplace-appropriate verbal interactions. Yorke (2006) identifies communication as one of the top five employability skills sought by employers. Communication skills entails giving and receiving information effectively, encompassing verbal, nonverbal, written, and listening skills. Some of the key components include active listening, clarity, empathy, respect, appropriate body language, and adaptability to different communication methods and audiences, all of which are crucial for successful personal and professional relationships and employability.

Interpersonal skills constitute a critical component of professional competence, encompassing the ability to communicate, collaborate, and maintain effective relationships with others in the workplace. They are often referred to as “people skills” or “soft skills” and are essential for achieving organizational goals in both private and public

sectors (Robles, 2012). Interpersonal skills entail effective communication, interaction, and cooperation with others, forming the basis of positive relationships in both personal and professional settings. Within the framework of the Industrial Training Programme, business education students have the opportunity to develop and refine these skills through direct engagement with real-world work environments.

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Skills gives students Training in database management, digital communication tools, enterprise resource planning systems, and online collaboration platforms improves technological competence. ICT Skills involves the ability to use tools of information and communication technology to access information and define one's information problem clearly. ICT Skills equips student with basic computer skills, insights in networking and security, web design and development, data analytics and visualization, and programming languages. Adebayo and Akinbode (2016) found that ICT proficiency significantly increases graduates' employability in today's digitized work environment.

Technical and Vocational Skills gives students proficiency in office technology, record management, bookkeeping, accounting software (e.g., QuickBooks, Peachtree), and document processing tools such as Microsoft Word, Excel, and PowerPoint. Okorie (2017) notes that such technical skills directly enhance a graduate's operational effectiveness in administrative and accounting roles.

Technical and vocational skills refer to the practical and job-specific abilities that enable individuals to carry out tasks and functions related to a particular trade, occupation, or

profession. In the context of Business Education students undergoing industrial training, these skills are developed through hands-on experience in real work environments such as offices, business centers, and administrative departments.

Through these skills, industrial training aims to produce graduates who are not only academically qualified but also workplace-ready. The ultimate goal is to improve their employability opportunities—defined as their capacity to secure and sustain gainful employment in their chosen fields (Yorke, 2006).

Despite the potential benefits, not all students fully develop these skills during industrial training due to challenges such as poor placement quality, inadequate supervision, mismatch between assigned tasks and academic background, and weak university-industry collaboration (Ezeani & Oladele, 2013). This raises the question of whether industrial training programmes in Edo State universities are achieving their intended objectives, particularly for business education students. Given these concerns, it becomes necessary to investigate how industrial training programme skills influence the employability opportunities of business education students in Edo State universities. Such evidence will help identify strengths and weaknesses in current practices and inform strategies for improvement.

Statement of the Problem

In an ideal educational framework, the inclusion of Industrial Training (IT) programmes into business education courses at universities in Edo State would provide students with an opportunity to put into practical skills related to real working culture and

processes of industries. In addition, students have an opportunity to enhance those skills, obtain the perspective of a work environment and benefit from a mentor or supervisor's experience and advice. Furthermore, Industrial training programmes offer students opportunity to build practical exposure of situation handling, decision making, marketing strategies, managing problems, planning risk, entrepreneurship and leadership quality; which in turn prepare graduates for the demands of the global business landscape and there also improving academic outcomes and student employability.

Despite the inclusion of the Industrial Training (IT) programme in the business education curriculum, there are persistent complaints from employers about the work readiness of graduates. Many business education graduates still struggle to secure employment or maintain jobs due to gaps in practical competencies, workplace adaptability, and problemsolving skills. While industrial training is designed to bridge the gap between theory and practice, there is insufficient empirical evidence on how effectively it develops employability skills among business education students in universities in Edo State.

In some cases, students are placed in organizations that do not fully align with their field of study, limiting the relevance of the skills they acquire. In other situations, inadequate supervision, poor exposure to modern technology, and a lack of structured learning plans during IT placements may reduce the programme’s effectiveness. These challenges raise critical questions about whether the industrial training programme is fulfilling its intended purpose of preparing students for the labour market.

Given the growing unemployment rate in Nigeria, especially among fresh graduates, there is an urgent need to investigate the influence of industrial training programme on the employability opportunities of business education students in universities in Edo state. Such a study would provide insights into the strengths and weaknesses of the current approach and suggest ways to improve the skills development process.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to examine the influence of Industrial training programme skills on the employability opportunity of business education students in universities in Edo State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to determine:

1. The extent to which communication skills influence the employability opportunity of Business Education students in universities in Edo State.
2. The extent to which interpersonal skills influence the employability opportunity of Business Education students in universities in Edo State.
3. The extent to which Information and Communication Technology (ICT) skills influence the employability opportunity of Business Education students in universities in Edo State.
4. The extent to which Technical and Vocational skills influence the employability opportunity of Business Education students in universities in Edo State.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study:

1. To what extent does communication skills influence the employability opportunity of Business Education students in universities in Edo State?
2. To what extent does interpersonal skills influence the employability opportunity of Business Education students in universities in Edo State?
3. To what extent does information and communication technology (ICT) skills influence the employability opportunity of Business Education students in universities in Edo State?
4. To what extent does technical and vocational skills influence the employability opportunity of Business Education students in universities in Edo State?

Significance of the Study

The findings of this study would be of immense benefit to various stakeholders, students, educators, educational institutions, employers, policymakers, future researchers and the general public when published in reputable journals, articles, conferences, and workshops.

The findings of this study will provide students with concrete evidence on how specific IT experiences directly enhance the acquisition of in-demand skills – such as financial analysis software proficiency, project management, digital marketing, and professional communication – boosting their confidence and competence. It will clearly demonstrate the correlation between high-quality, well-supported industrial placements and significantly improved job readiness and employability outcomes upon graduation. Armed with this knowledge, students will be empowered to approach their IT periods

with greater intentionality, actively seeking meaningful placements, networking strategically, and documenting acquired competencies.

The findings of this study will offer Educational institutions a robust evaluation framework for their existing IT programmes. It will highlight strengths to build upon and weaknesses requiring intervention, enabling institutions to strengthen the design, implementation, and supervision of these crucial training periods. Crucially, it will underscore the necessity for fostering deeper, more sustainable partnerships with industry. By demonstrating the positive correlation between effective IT and graduate employability, the study will provide institutions with compelling evidence to enhance their reputation, attract better students, and ultimately improve their graduate employment rankings, a key performance indicator in today's competitive higher education environment.

The findings of this study will be of immense benefits to Policy makers at both the state and national levels, including the Edo State Ministry of Education, the National Universities Commission (NUC), and other educational regulatory bodies, the study will provide essential empirical data. It will inform evidence-based policy formulation, potentially leading to mandates or strengthened guidelines for robust, high-quality IT programmes across all relevant tertiary institutions. The findings will justify the allocation of targeted funding and resources to support internship schemes, industry liaison offices, and monitoring mechanisms within universities. Moreover, it will equip

policymakers with criteria to effectively evaluate the impact and return on investment of existing industrial training policies and initiatives.

The findings of this study will open avenues for further researchers or investigation, such as comparative analyses of IT effectiveness across different Nigerian states or between various disciplines. It will inspire longitudinal studies tracking the long-term career progression and earnings potential of graduates who participated in IT versus those who did not. Additionally, the evolving nature of business practices, particularly the rise of digital skills, presents fertile ground for future research prompted by this study's findings, examining how IT programmes can best incorporate and develop these critical competencies.

Scope of the Study

The study examined the influence of industrial training programme skills on the employability opportunity of business education students in universities in Edo State. It is further limited to business education students in faculty of Education, University of Benin, Edo State and Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma (AAU). This study also covered content variables such as communication skills, interpersonal skills, information and communication technology (ICT) skills, and Technical and Vocational skills.

Definition of Terms

The following term were operationally defined:

Industrial Training (IT): A supervised practical training programme undertaken by students in an actual workplace to acquire job-related skills.

Employability: The set of achievements, skills, understandings, and personal attributes that make graduates more likely to gain employment and succeed in their chosen occupations.

Business Education: An educational programme that prepares students for careers in business, including fields like management, accounting, marketing, and office technology.

SIWES: Students Industrial Work Experience Scheme, a programme in Nigeria that provides practical experience to students of certain disciplines.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

The review of literature was treated under the following subheadings:

- Concept of Industrial Training Programme
- Concept of Employability

- Concept of Business Education
- Communication Skills and Employability Opportunity
- Interpersonal Skills and Employability Opportunity
- Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Skills and Employability Opportunity
- Technical and Vocational Skills and Employability Opportunity
- Challenges and Barriers in Integrating Industrial Training Programme Skills into Employability Opportunity of Business Education Students
- Review of Related Empirical Studies
- Summary of Review Literature

Concept of Industrial Training Programme

Industrial Training Programme (ITP) is a structured process designed to expose students to practical experiences in industrial, commercial, and service-based organizations. In

Nigeria, the most recognized form of industrial training is the Students Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES), established in 1973 by the Industrial Training Fund (ITF). The main objective was to bridge the gap between theoretical classroom learning and practical application in the workplace (Akerejola, 2008). Through ITP, students in business education and related disciplines are expected to acquire practical knowledge in accounting, marketing, office practice, management, information systems, and customer relations. This exposure enhances their employability and professional readiness. The

programme also enables students to learn work ethics, time management, team dynamics, and problem-solving skills— competencies often demanded by employers but difficult to acquire in academic classrooms. Industrial training equally provides an avenue for industries to assess future graduates, thereby creating a mutual benefit between institutions and employers (ITF, 1973). Scholars such as Okolie et al. (2021) emphasize that industrial training is not only about skill acquisition but also about fostering adaptability, innovation, and resilience in the workforce.

Industrial Training (IT), often synonymous with structured work placement programs like Nigeria's Students Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES), stands as a cornerstone experiential learning strategy within Business Education. Its fundamental concept revolves around providing students with supervised, real-world work experience in industry settings directly relevant to their field of study. In the specific context of enhancing the employability opportunities of Business Education graduates from universities in Edo State, IT is not merely an add-on but a critical intervention designed to bridge the persistent chasm between academic theory and workplace practice.

Industrial Training functions as a deliberate immersion into the professional environment. It moves students beyond the simulated exercises of the classroom and into the authentic complexities, rhythms, and challenges of actual business operations. As Oviawe (2020) consistently argues within the Nigerian Business Education landscape, this immersion is crucial for translating abstract concepts learned in courses like Accounting, Marketing, Management, and Office Technology into tangible, applicable

skills. It is within this authentic context that students encounter the real pressures, deadlines, interpersonal dynamics, and technological tools that define modern business practice. Oranu, Modebelu, and Omeje (2022) further stress that IT provides the vital platform for students to observe and internalize professional ethics, corporate culture, and sustainable business practices in action – elements difficult to fully replicate in an academic setting.

The primary conceptual link between IT and enhanced employability lies in its role as a catalyst for developing critical employability capital. Drawing implicitly on Human Capital Theory (Becker, 1964), contemporary authors highlight how IT directly builds the specific skills employers demand. Okolie, Elom, and Nwajiuba (2021) emphasize that effective IT placements allow students to hone both specialized technical/vocational skills (e.g., using specific accounting software like QuickBooks or Sage, conducting market research, managing CRM systems, executing advanced spreadsheet functions) and indispensable soft skills. The latter includes professional communication (written reports, presentations, client interaction), teamwork, problem-solving in real-time, adaptability, time management, and resilience – skills consistently ranked high by employers globally and within Nigeria (Ojo, 2021; Nwosu & Ohia, 2021). Furthermore, IT is increasingly recognized as essential for developing digital fluency. Ojo (2021) argues that exposure to industry-standard digital tools, data analytics platforms, ecommerce systems, and cybersecurity practices during IT is paramount for

BE graduates to remain competitive, as digital transformation reshapes every business function.

Beyond skill acquisition, IT serves as a powerful signal of work readiness to potential employers, aligning with Signaling Theory (Spence, 1973). Completing a relevant and rigorous IT program, documented on a graduate's CV and often verified through references, signals practical competence, initiative, familiarity with workplace norms, and a degree of professional maturity. As highlighted by studies focusing on graduate outcomes, employers perceive candidates with substantial, quality IT experience as lower-risk hires who require less initial training and can contribute faster (Okolie et al., 2021). This signaling effect is particularly crucial in competitive job markets like Edo State, where distinguishing oneself is key.

Concept of Employability

The concept of employability has gained significant scholarly attention over the past two decades, especially within the fields of vocational and business education. Employability refers to the ability of an individual to gain, maintain, and progress in employment through the possession and demonstration of relevant skills, knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours demanded by the labour market. According to Yorke (2006), employability is "a set of achievements—skills, understandings, and personal attributes—that make graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations." This definition emphasizes that employability is not merely about securing

a job, but about developing capabilities that support long-term career sustainability and self development.

In the context of business education, employability emphasizes the integration of technical competencies (e.g., accounting and ICT skills) with soft skills (e.g., communication, teamwork, critical thinking). Idoko and Nwosu (2021) argue that graduates who can demonstrate both technical expertise and interpersonal intelligence are better positioned to thrive in the competitive labour market. Employability is also linked to lifelong learning, as industries demand graduates who can continuously upgrade their skills to remain relevant in rapidly changing economies.

Also, In the context of Edo State universities, employability is particularly important due to the dynamic and competitive nature of Nigeria's labour market. Business education students are expected to combine academic knowledge with practical occupational skills to increase their employability opportunities. Industrial training enhances exposure to workplace technologies, professional norms, and hands-on business operations, which in turn improves students' readiness for employment. Thus, employability is best understood as a multifaceted construct involving personal competencies, workplace exposure, career behaviours, and labour market relevance.

At the foundation lies "Human Capital Theory (Becker, 1964; Schultz, 1961)", which posits education and training as critical investments enhancing an individual's productive capacity and economic value. This perspective views the knowledge, skills, and competencies acquired during IT, ranging from specialized software proficiency to

advanced communication and problem-solving abilities, as tangible assets added to the graduate's human capital portfolio. For business education students, industrial training transforms theoretical classroom learning into practical abilities, thereby increasing employability. Contemporary scholars explicitly leverage this framework. Okolie, Elom, and Nwajiuba (2021) frame effective IT programs as vital investments by both institutions and students, specifically designed to build the precise forms of human capital – the technical and soft skills – demanded by the evolving Nigerian labour market. The expectation is that this investment yields returns through improved employability, higher starting salaries, and faster career progression. Oviawe (2020), while often focusing on practical implementation, implicitly draws on this logic when arguing that IT directly addresses the skills gaps identified by employers, thereby increasing the graduate's market value. This theory fundamentally underpins inquiries into the level of skills acquired during IT and the subsequent influence of these skills on actual employment opportunities, framing skills as the core currency in the graduate labour market.

Complementing this investment perspective is Experiential Learning Theory (Kolb, 1984), which elucidates the very process by which IT fosters skill development and professional understanding. Kolb's cyclical model emphasizes that meaningful learning arises from the dynamic interplay of concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. IT provides the indispensable "concrete experience" within this cycle, immersing BE students in the authentic complexities, rhythms, and challenges of real workplaces. It is within this crucible that

abstract theories learned in Accounting, Marketing, or Management lectures are tested, refined, or even challenged. Recent scholarship underscores the centrality of this experiential process. Oranu, Modebelu, and Omeje (2022) discuss how high-quality IT placements facilitate the full experiential cycle, enabling students to grapple with real-world business dilemmas, reflect on their actions and observations, conceptualize deeper understandings of organizational dynamics and ethical considerations, and experiment with new approaches. This iterative process is crucial not just for skill acquisition, but for developing professional judgment, contextual understanding, and adaptive problem-solving capabilities – elements difficult to cultivate solely in the lecture hall. Okolie et al. (2021) further highlight the critical, yet often underdeveloped, role of structured reflection during and after IT to maximize learning from the experience. This theory provides the crucial explanatory mechanism for how skills and professional competencies are internalized during IT, and equally, how challenges like inadequate supervision or irrelevant tasks can disrupt this vital learning cycle.

Possessing enhanced human capital developed through experiential learning is only part of the equation. Signalling Theory (Spence, 1973) addresses the critical challenge of information asymmetry in the job market: employers cannot perfectly observe a candidate's true abilities or work ethic. The theory posits that individuals use credible, often costly-to-fake, signals to convey their underlying productivity potential to employers. Successfully completing a relevant, rigorous, and well-documented IT program serves as precisely such a powerful signal. It communicates to potential

employers that the graduate possesses practical skills, understands professional norms, has demonstrated initiative and resilience in a real work environment, and has been evaluated (formally or informally) by industry professionals. Contemporary research validates this signalling function within the Nigerian context. Okolie et al. (2021) cite employer perspectives indicating a strong preference for candidates with substantial IT experience, perceiving them as significantly more "work-ready" and requiring less initial investment in training. The IT experience documented on a CV and potentially reinforced by references acts as a credible testament to the graduate's practical competence and adaptability, reducing the perceived risk for the employer. Nwosu and Ohia (2021) implicitly support this, noting the competitive edge graduates gain from showcasing documented practical experience. This theory is indispensable for explaining the level of perceived employability reported by students post-IT and the extent to which IT experience directly influences the likelihood of securing job interviews and offers.

Further enriching this integrated framework is Employability Capital Theory (Fugate, Kinicki, & Ashforth, 2004), which offers a holistic view of employability as a form of psychosocial capital comprising multiple dimensions. While originating earlier, its relevance is strongly affirmed in contemporary analyses of graduate employability. The theory identifies:

Human Capital: The skills, knowledge, and abilities discussed above.

Social Capital: The networks, relationships, and connections built during the IT placement, potentially leading to mentors, referees, or job leads.

Career Identity: The enhanced self-awareness, clarified career goals, and professional confidence developed through exposure to different roles and workplace cultures during IT**.**

Personal Adaptability: The resilience, openness to change, and ability to navigate ambiguity fostered by successfully managing the challenges of a new work environment.

Recent work by scholars like Okolie et al. (2021) and Oranu et al. (2022) resonates strongly with this multi-faceted view. Their discussions on the importance of professional networks, self-efficacy, ethical grounding, and resilience gained through IT align perfectly with the idea that employability extends beyond just skills (human capital) to encompass the broader social, identity, and adaptability resources crucial for sustained career success. This theory provides a comprehensive lens for understanding the full spectrum of benefits derived from IT, including those contributing to perceived employability and long-term career navigation.

Concept of Business Education

Business education is a specialized field of study that combines general education, vocational training, and professional preparation in business and commerce. It is offered at both secondary and tertiary levels, and its curriculum typically covers accounting, office practice, marketing, management, entrepreneurship, and ICT applications. According to Osuala (2005), business education is “that aspect of vocational education which equips individuals with knowledge, skills, and competencies necessary for success in business and office occupations.” Similarly, Okwelle (2020) defines it as “an

educational programme that provides learners with the foundation for self-reliance and gainful employment in businessrelated careers." The significance of business education lies in its dual role; it prepares students for wage employment in corporate organizations, and it empowers them with entrepreneurial skills for self-employment. By integrating industrial training into its curriculum, business education ensures that graduates are not only academically knowledgeable but also practically competent in real workplace demands.

Business Education is seen as a dynamic and essential discipline within the broader educational landscape, continually adapting to the seismic shifts in global commerce, technology, and societal expectations. Its conceptualization has evolved beyond traditional notions of vocational training for office work, maturing into a comprehensive educational endeavour focused on equipping individuals with the multifaceted competencies required for success, adaptability, and responsible citizenship in the complex 21st-century business environment. Contemporary scholars emphasize that Business Education is fundamentally goal-oriented, aiming to prepare learners not merely for entry-level positions but for sustained career progression, entrepreneurial ventures, informed economic participation, and the navigation of an increasingly digital and ethically conscious marketplace.

At its core, modern Business Education is defined by its commitment to workforce readiness and enhanced employability. This involves cultivating a sophisticated blend of specialized knowledge and practical skills. As Oviawe (2020)

persistently argues, a critical function of BE, particularly in contexts like Nigeria, is bridging the persistent gap between theoretical knowledge acquired in academia and the practical skills demanded by employers.

This necessitates moving beyond rote learning to foster deep understanding and application. Consequently, contemporary BE curricula strive to develop both technical/vocational proficiencies, such as advanced accounting techniques, data-driven marketing analytics, human resource management strategies, and mastery of complex office technologies and crucially important transferable soft skills. These soft skills, encompassing effective communication (written and oral), critical thinking, creative problem-solving, collaborative teamwork, adaptability, and resilience, are increasingly recognized as the bedrock of long-term career success and are heavily emphasized in current pedagogical approaches (Nwosu & Ohia, 2021; Okolie, Elom, & Nwajiuba, 2021).

Integral to the modern concept of BE is the explicit focus on entrepreneurship development. Recognizing the vital role of new ventures in job creation and economic dynamism, Business Education programs now actively seek to instil an entrepreneurial mindset characterized by creativity, innovation, opportunity recognition, and calculated risk-taking. Scholars like Oviawe (2020) and Oranu, Modebelu, and Omeje (2022) highlight how contemporary BE goes beyond teaching about business to fostering the capabilities needed to start and sustain businesses. This includes practical training in developing viable business plans, understanding funding mechanisms, mastering market research, and navigating the legal and regulatory frameworks for new enterprises.

The relentless pace of digital transformation has profoundly reshaped the concept of Business Education. Digital literacy is no longer a supplementary skill but an indispensable core competency. As Ojo (2021) compellingly argues, proficiency in utilizing business software suites, data analytics tools, digital marketing platforms, e-commerce systems, and an understanding of cybersecurity principles and the implications of emerging technologies like artificial intelligence and automation are fundamental expectations for graduates. Modern BE curricula are thus engaged in a continuous process of integrating these digital competencies across all specializations, ensuring graduates are not merely users of technology but understand its strategic application and transformative impact on business models and processes.

The contemporary conceptualization also places significant emphasis on ethical foundations and sustainable business practices. There is a growing consensus that Business Education must equip future professionals with a strong moral compass and an understanding of corporate social responsibility (CSR). Okolie et al. (2021) and Oranu et al. (2022) stress the importance of embedding ethical reasoning, sustainability principles, and good governance into the fabric of BE programs. Graduates are expected to navigate complex ethical dilemmas, understand the environmental and social impacts of business decisions, and contribute to building organizations that prioritize long-term sustainability alongside profitability. This focus aligns Business Education with broader global goals, as highlighted by UNESCO (2021) in its vision for education contributing to sustainable futures, positioning BE as crucial for developing responsible economic actors.

Communication Skills and Employability Opportunity

Communication skills are among the most essential competencies required for employability in today's dynamic labour market. They refer to an individual's ability to convey information effectively through verbal, non-verbal, written, and digital channels. According to Robles (2012), communication skills involve clarity of expression, active listening, feedback interpretation, interpersonal interaction, and the ability to adapt messages to different audiences. For business education students, communication skills encompass writing business reports, making presentations, engaging in customer interactions, negotiating, and exchanging information accurately in office settings.

Employers consistently rank communication skills among the top attributes they seek in graduates. In a study conducted by Finch et al. (2013), employers identified communication competence as one of the strongest predictors of graduates' workplace success. Effective communication supports teamwork, improves productivity, enhances customer relations, and facilitates smooth organizational operations—factors that directly influence employability. Similarly, Barker and Hibbins (2020) argue that communication competence enables graduates to navigate complex work environments, demonstrate professionalism, and integrate easily into work teams, thereby increasing their chances of employment and career progression.

Industrial training programmes such as SIWES play a crucial role in developing students' communication abilities. During industrial training, business education students are exposed to real workplace interactions that allow them to practice writing emails, drafting

memos, preparing reports, making presentations, and engaging with supervisors, clients, and colleagues. This experiential exposure aligns with Kolb's (1984) Experiential Learning Theory, which posits that learners acquire deeper understanding through concrete experience and active engagement.

Students also learn workplace etiquette, professional tone, and digital communication practices—skills that cannot be fully acquired through classroom learning alone. Okwelle and Okorie (2017) found that students who complete industrial training demonstrate improved communication abilities due to consistent practice in real work settings. The more students interact within organizational structures, the more confident and competent they become in expressing ideas and performing professional tasks.

Communication Skills serves as a driver of employability opportunity for business education students. Communication skills significantly enhance employability opportunities through several mechanisms:

- Improved Job Readiness:

Graduates with strong communication skills are better prepared for interviews, workplace conversations, and professional presentations.

- Enhanced Workplace Integration:

Effective communication facilitates collaboration and makes it easier for new employees to adapt to organizational culture.

- Greater Professional Visibility:

Confident communicators are more likely to participate in meetings, contribute ideas, and assume leadership roles.

- Higher Employer Satisfaction:

Employers view communication skills as indicators of professionalism, maturity, and competence.

- Increased Career Advancement Opportunities:

Communication competence strengthens interpersonal relationships, which influences promotions, leadership roles, and job retention.

A study by Andrews and Higson (2008) reported that employers in both developed and developing economies view communication competence as a critical employability skill that distinguishes job candidates in competitive markets. In the Nigerian context, communication skills are particularly important due to the multilingual and multicultural nature of workplaces, where clarity, professionalism, and adaptability in communication determine workplace success.

Business education students are trained to work in administrative, managerial, and business environments where communication is central to job performance. Their employability depends largely on their ability to express information clearly, manage documents, interact with business clients, and respond professionally to workplace challenges. Industrial training enhances these abilities by exposing students to real-life business communication tasks.

As Edo State continues to expand in commerce, public administration, SMEs, and digital enterprises, graduates with strong communication skills gain more employment opportunities. Thus, communication skills form a core component of industrial training programme skills that directly influence the employability opportunities of business education students.

Interpersonal Skills and Employability Opportunity

Interpersonal skills refer to the abilities that enable individuals to interact effectively with others in personal, academic, and workplace environments. They include teamwork, conflict resolution, empathy, collaboration, leadership, negotiation, and the ability to build and maintain positive relationships. Interpersonal skills are often described as "people skills" because they facilitate social interaction and cooperation among workers (Dwyer & Davidson, 2012). In the context of business education, interpersonal skills are essential for functioning effectively in administrative, managerial, and business roles where collaboration and human interaction occur frequently.

According to Robles (2012), interpersonal skills represent one of the most valued soft skill categories by employers globally. Business organizations require graduates who can work harmoniously with colleagues, manage customers professionally, and adapt to diverse workplace cultures. These skills enable individuals to function smoothly in teams, communicate ideas, influence decisions, and resolve conflicts constructively. For business education students, strong interpersonal skills enhance their ability to engage in customer service, group projects, administrative tasks, and leadership roles within

organizations. Industrial training plays a critical role in strengthening students' interpersonal abilities. During industrial placements, students interact with supervisors, co-workers, clients, and stakeholders in real work environments. This exposure improves their ability to relate with others, collaborate in teams, manage workplace stress, and respond appropriately to organizational expectations. Industrial training environments provide opportunities for students to practice empathy, manage disagreements, negotiate roles, and adapt to group dynamics.

Kolb's (1984) Experiential Learning Theory offers a strong explanation for how interpersonal skills are acquired during industrial training. Through concrete experiences in workplace interactions, students observe social behaviours, practice communication strategies, reflect on interpersonal encounters, and internalize new behavioural patterns. These real-life experiences are critical for developing relationship-management skills that cannot be fully gained through classroom lectures.

Emiola and Adebisi (2021) found that Nigerian university students who participated in structured industrial training programmes demonstrated significant improvement in interpersonal competencies such as teamwork, leadership confidence, conflict handling, and workplace collaboration. The more students engage in interpersonal exchanges at work, the more they develop the social maturity required by employers.

Interpersonal Skills serves as predictors of employability opportunity. Interpersonal skills have been widely recognized as strong predictors of graduate employability. Finch

et al. (2013) identified interpersonal skills—including teamwork, adaptability, and relationship-building— as among the top competencies sought by employers when selecting graduates for employment.

These skills influence employability in several ways:

- Teamwork Competence:

Modern workplaces rely heavily on team-based structures. Graduates with strong teamwork abilities are more likely to be hired, retained, and promoted.

- Customer and Client Interaction:

Interpersonal skills enable employees to engage effectively with customers, enhance client satisfaction, and build professional relationships.

- Adaptability and Social Intelligence:

Employers value individuals who can navigate diverse workplace cultures and interact with people from different backgrounds.

- Leadership Potential:

Strong interpersonal skills indicate readiness for supervisory or managerial roles.

- Conflict Resolution Ability:

Employees who can handle disagreements constructively contribute to a positive work climate, increasing their employability and retention.

A study by Andrews and Higson (2008) emphasized that inadequate interpersonal skills among graduates was one of the main reasons employers hesitated to hire new entrants into the labour force. Conversely, graduates with strong interpersonal

competence are perceived as more employable, efficient, and culturally fit within organizations.

Business education students are trained for careers that involve constant human interaction such as office administration, customer relations, sales, finance, and business management. These fields require interpersonal competence for effective service delivery and teamwork. The competitive nature of the labour market in Edo State demands graduates who can collaborate, influence decisions, and maintain professional relationships.

Industrial training enhances students' readiness for these organizational requirements by providing authentic settings where interpersonal skills are cultivated. Therefore, interpersonal skills serve as a vital industrial training programme skill that significantly influences the employability opportunities of business education students in Edo State.

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Skills and Employability Opportunity

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) skills refer to the ability to utilize digital tools, software applications, communication systems, and technological devices to process, store, retrieve, and communicate information effectively. In the contemporary digital economy, ICT skills are essential for academic success, workplace productivity, and employability. According to UNESCO (2018), ICT competence encompasses knowledge of computer operations, digital communication, word processing,

spreadsheets, database management, internet navigation, and the use of industry-specific software.

In business education, ICT skills form a core component of students' technical preparation for modern workplaces. Business organizations increasingly rely on digital technologies for accounting, data management, office communication, marketing, customer relations, and administrative functions. Consequently, graduates with strong ICT capabilities are more likely to secure employment, adapt quickly to workplace systems, and remain competitive in the labour market.

Industrial training programmes serve as a practical platform for students to develop and refine ICT skills. During industrial attachment, students are exposed to workplace technologies such as:

- Accounting software (e.g., QuickBooks, Sage, Peachtree, SAP)
- Office productivity tools (Microsoft Office Suite, Google Workspace)
- Digital communication tools (email systems, CRM platforms)
- Management information systems
- Online collaboration technologies (Zoom, Teams, Slack)
- Office machines (printers, copiers, scanners, fax systems)

Industrial training enables students to apply classroom knowledge in real business environments, thereby enhancing their ICT proficiency. According to Okwelle and Okorie (2017), students who participate in industrial training demonstrate significantly

improved ICT competencies because they gain hands-on experience with digital tools and technologies widely used in organizations.

Kolb's (1984) Experiential Learning Theory explains that learning through direct engagement with ICT tools enhances understanding, retention, and skill mastery. When students operate technologies in practical settings—making calculations, preparing documents, managing data, communicating electronically—they develop real-world ICT competence that strengthens their workplace readiness.

ICT Skills serves as predictors of employability opportunity for business education students. ICT skills are widely recognized as strong predictors of employability in both national and international labour markets. The increasing digitization of work processes has made technological competence a prerequisite for job opportunities across all sectors. According to the World Bank (2020), digital literacy is now a fundamental employability requirement, and graduates lacking ICT competencies experience reduced job prospects.

ICT skills enhance employability in several ways:

- Improved Job Readiness:

Employers expect graduates to be proficient in office software, digital communication, and data management.

- Adaptability to Technological Work Environments:

ICT-skilled graduates adjust easily to digital workplaces and can learn new technologies quickly.

- Increased Productivity and Efficiency:

Proficiency in ICT tools enhances accuracy, speed, and overall job performance.

- Greater Access to Job Opportunities:

Many recruitment processes—including applications, tests, and interviews—are conducted online.

- Enhanced Career Advancement and Mobility:

Employees with advanced ICT skills are more likely to be selected for leadership or specialized roles.

Finch et al. (2013) found that employers place high value on ICT skills when assessing graduate employability, especially in fields where digital literacy supports organizational operations. In business sectors such as banking, administration, education, finance, and entrepreneurship, ICT competence enhances opportunities for employment and career progression.

For business education students in Edo State, ICT skills are crucial because the state's labour market is increasingly digitized. Organizations expect graduates to manage digital documents, process financial transactions electronically, maintain customer records on databases, and communicate using digital channels. Industrial training exposes students to these ICT demands and helps them acquire practical digital competencies.

Furthermore, the integration of ICT into courses such as business communication, office technology, management information systems, and accounting means that students who develop strong ICT skills stand a higher chance of securing employment and

performing effectively in the workplace. ICT not only enhances employability in traditional office settings but also provides entrepreneurial opportunities in areas such as freelance digital services, ebusiness, and online consultancy. ICT competence therefore forms a vital industrial training programme skill that significantly influences employability opportunities for business education students.

Technical and Vocational Skills and Employability Opportunity

Technical and vocational skills refer to the practical, job-specific competencies that enable individuals to carry out specialized tasks within occupational, industrial, and business environments. These skills include hands-on abilities, problem-solving techniques, craftsmanship, operational competence, and occupation-specific knowledge acquired through education, training, and workplace experience. According to UNESCO (2015), technical and vocational skills are fundamental for preparing learners for work, enhancing productivity, promoting innovation, and improving employability in modern economies.

Within business education, technical and vocational skills encompass competencies such as office technology operations, bookkeeping and accounting procedures, business documentation, entrepreneurship skills, digital literacy, record management, and administrative capabilities. These skills are essential because they equip students with practical knowledge required to function effectively in clerical, administrative, financial, and business related occupations. Okolocha and Agwuna (2019)

emphasize that technical and vocational education equips learners with both cognitive and manipulative abilities that enhance their readiness for the labour market.

Industrial training programmes, such as the Students Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES), play a central role in developing students' technical and vocational competencies. During industrial placements, business education students are exposed to real work environments where they learn to:

- Operate modern office machines and ICT tools
- Apply accounting procedures using manual and digital systems
- Manage administrative tasks and business documentation
- Perform customer service and clerical duties
- Use workplace technologies (e.g., scanners, copiers, POS systems, communication devices)
- Understand organizational processes, business ethics, and workflow systems

This hands-on exposure bridges the gap between theoretical classroom knowledge and practical workplace requirements. According to Njoku and Osuala (2018), industrial training reinforces students' technical and vocational skills by allowing them to observe, practice, and internalize occupational competencies in real-time work situations.

Kolb's (1984) Experiential Learning Theory provides a strong theoretical explanation for how technical skills are acquired during industrial training. Through concrete experiences, reflective observation, and active experimentation, students develop mastery of occupationspecific tasks, refine their technical abilities, and gain

confidence in handling workplace equipment and tools. Thus, industrial training serves as a powerful platform for skill reinforcement and professional development.

Technical and Vocational Skills serves as drivers of employability opportunity. Technical and vocational skills are among the strongest predictors of employability, particularly in developing economies like Nigeria where employers prioritize practical competence. The International Labour Organization (ILO, 2020) states that individuals with strong vocational and technical competencies have higher chances of securing employment, maintaining jobs, and advancing in their careers.

Technical and vocational skills influence employability opportunity in several ways:

- Job-Specific Competence:

Graduates with proven technical ability are more attractive to employers who require skilled labour for immediate job responsibilities.

- Workplace Readiness:

Individuals with vocational training adapt more quickly to workplace procedures and organizational technologies.

- Increased Productivity and Efficiency:

Technical skills enhance accuracy, speed, and quality of job performance, making graduates more valuable to employers.

- Labour Market Versatility:

Technical competence enables graduates to function in multiple occupational roles, improving their employment prospects.

- Entrepreneurial Opportunities:

Vocational skills empower individuals to start small businesses or engage in selfemployment, thereby widening employability options.

Research by Finch et al. (2013) shows that employers consider technical competence a critical component of employability, especially in administrative, business, and office management occupations. In the Nigerian context, Ejere (2011) found that technical and vocational skills significantly increased graduates' employability because they meet the practical demands of organizations in the formal and informal sectors.

For business education students in Edo State, technical and vocational skills are essential because the region's labour market demands graduates who can use digital office tools, perform clerical tasks, apply accounting systems, and manage administrative functions efficiently. Universities provide the theoretical foundation, but industrial training exposes students to the practical realities of business operations, strengthening their job-specific skills.

Consequently, students who acquire strong technical and vocational skills through industrial training have greater employability opportunities. They are better prepared for jobs in government ministries, financial institutions, SMEs, educational institutions, private enterprises, and entrepreneurial ventures within the state. Therefore, technical and

vocational skills constitute a vital industrial training programme skill that significantly enhances the employability outcomes of business education students.

Challenges and Barriers in Integrating Industrial Training Programme Skills into Employability Opportunity of Business Education Students

Industrial Training (IT) is widely acknowledged as an indispensable component of professional education, particularly in fields like Business Education, designed to equip students with practical skills and workplace readiness. However, the journey through this experiential learning phase is frequently fraught with significant challenges that can impede its effectiveness and diminish the anticipated benefits. Recent research (2020-2025) sheds light on the persistent and emerging hurdles students encounter during their IT placements, highlighting a complex landscape that requires ongoing attention from educational institutions, host organizations, and policymakers.

One of the most pervasive and fundamental challenges remains the difficulty in securing relevant and high-quality placements. As Agbu and Osunde (2021) document, students often face intense competition and bureaucratic hurdles in finding positions that align closely with their specific Business Education specialization (e.g., Accounting, Marketing, Management). This problem is often exacerbated in regions like Edo State, where the industrial base may be dominated by Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) or specific service sectors that may not offer the depth or breadth of experience needed across all business disciplines (Agbonlahor, 2023). Consequently, students may be placed

in roles that are only tangentially related to their field, limiting their exposure to core professional tasks and skill development opportunities.

Compounding the placement issue is the recurring problem of inadequate supervision and mentorship. Okolie, Nwosu, and Mlanga (2021) emphasize that effective learning during IT hinges on consistent guidance and feedback from both university supervisors and industrybased mentors. However, students frequently report infrequent visits or minimal engagement from overburdened academic supervisors. Simultaneously, industry supervisors, often busy with their core responsibilities, may lack the time, training, or incentive to provide structured mentorship, meaningful feedback, or challenging assignments aligned with the student's learning objectives (Ayonmike & Okwuanaso, 2020). This lack of robust supervision leaves students feeling unsupported, unsure of their progress, and unable to maximize the learning potential of the placement.

A particularly demoralizing challenge, frequently cited in recent studies, is the prevalence of non-engaging or irrelevant tasks, sometimes termed "clerical slavery." Ayonmike and Okwuanaso (2020) found that many Business Education students, despite their specialized training, are assigned menial, repetitive duties such as photocopying, filing, making tea, or running errands, tasks far removed from their field of study. Ugwuoke, Eze, and Onyeke (2022) corroborate this, noting that such experiences fail to develop the technical or critical soft skills IT is intended to foster. This misalignment between student expectations/capabilities and the actual work assigned leads to

frustration, disengagement, and a perception that the IT period is a wasted opportunity rather than a valuable learning experience.

The financial burden associated with IT continues to pose a significant hardship for many students. Eze and Okolie (2023) detail the substantial costs incurred, including transportation (especially if the placement is far from residence), accommodation (if relocation is necessary), feeding, and sometimes even mandatory fees paid to the host organization or intermediaries. While stipends are mandated in schemes like SIWES, students report delays in disbursement, amounts insufficient to cover actual costs, or instances where no stipend is paid at all, particularly in the private sector or smaller NGOs (Agbonlahor, 2023). This financial strain can distract students from focusing fully on their learning, force them to seek part-time work, or even lead them to abandon placements prematurely. Overcoming these challenges requires stronger collaborations between institutions and industries, regular curriculum updates, and government interventions to ensure adequate funding and monitoring.

Review of Related Empirical Studies

Empirical studies conducted in recent years consistently reinforce the argument that well-executed industrial attachments significantly enhance the practical skill sets of Business Education students, directly contributing to their perceived and actual employability. Research focusing on employer perspectives within Edo State reveals a strong preference for graduates possessing demonstrable practical experience. Osasohan et al. (2020), surveying employers in Benin City, found that over 80% prioritized

practical skills and work experience over theoretical knowledge when hiring fresh business graduates, explicitly valuing competencies honed during programs like SIWES. This employer validation is crucial, as it signals the direct market relevance of the skills targeted by IT. Further empirical work by Okolie, Elom, and Mlanga (2022) examining business education across Nigerian tertiary institutions corroborates this, demonstrating that students who participated in relevant and well-supervised IT placements reported substantial gains in not only technical proficiencies (such as financial software application, marketing analytics, and logistics management) but also in indispensable soft skills. These include enhanced communication, critical thinking, problem-solving in authentic business scenarios, teamwork, and adaptability – competencies repeatedly identified as critical for workplace success and highly sought after by employers globally and locally.

The link between IT participation and improved employability outcomes is further substantiated by tracer studies and graduate self-assessments. Recent empirical investigations suggest that Business Education graduates who rate their IT experience positively – characterized by relevance to their field, adequate supervision, and meaningful task engagement – exhibit higher levels of self-efficacy and confidence in navigating the job market (Ayonmike, 2021). This enhanced self-perceived employability often translates into tangible advantages. Research by Adekola and Smith (2021), although broader in scope, indicates that graduates with robust IT experience documented through credible assessments and references tend to secure job interviews faster and

experience shorter transition periods from graduation to first employment compared to their counterparts without such experience. Furthermore, studies point to the networking opportunities inherent in successful IT placements. Oviawe (2021), in a study pertinent to Edo State, observed that students who built positive relationships and demonstrated competence during their industrial training were more likely to receive job offers or strong referrals from their host organizations, effectively converting the placement into a potential recruitment pipeline.

However, contemporary empirical research also presents a stark picture of the systemic challenges that continue to undermine the effectiveness of IT programs in Edo State, directly impacting their ability to enhance employability optimally. A recurring and critical issue identified in recent studies is the persistent misalignment between university curricula, IT placement opportunities, and actual industry demands within Edo State's specific economic ecosystem, which is dominated by small and medium-scale enterprises (SMEs) and service industries rather than large multinational corporations. Oviawe (2021) empirically documented cases where Business Education students from Edo universities were placed in roles bearing little resemblance to their specialization (e.g., an Accounting student performing only clerical duties in a manufacturing plant, or a Marketing student lacking exposure to digital marketing strategies in a local retail outfit). This misalignment severely limits the acquisition of relevant, cutting-edge skills. Compounding this problem is the often-reported inadequacy of supervision. Research by Imhonopi and Urim (2020) highlights that insufficient monitoring by both university coordinators, often burdened

with heavy workloads, and overstretched industry supervisors results in students being underutilized, relegated to menial tasks, or lacking structured learning objectives during their placement, diminishing the skill development potential.

Funding constraints remain a significant empirical reality hindering IT effectiveness. Inadequate or delayed payment of SIWES allowances, as consistently reported in studies including those by Ayonmike (2021), demotivates students and can limit placement duration or access to quality organizations, particularly within Edo State where suitable private sector partners may be limited. Furthermore, a critical gap identified in recent literature concerns the assessment methodologies. Empirical critiques, such as those presented by Ezeani and Chukwuedo (2020), argue that reliance on simplistic logbooks and superficial final reports fails to capture the depth and quality of skill acquisition or professional development during IT. They advocate for more robust, competency-based assessment models involving input from industry supervisors and reflective portfolios from students to provide a more accurate measure of the skills gained, which are crucial for signalling employability to potential employers.

Summary of Literature Reviewed

The reviewed literature presents a compelling, yet complex, narrative regarding the influence of Industrial Training (IT) programme skills on the employability opportunities for Business Education graduates from universities in Edo State, Nigeria. Empirical studies consistently affirm the potential of programmes like the Students Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES) to act as a vital bridge between academic

theory and workplace demands, directly impacting graduate readiness for the labour market. However, this potential is significantly mediated by the quality, relevance, and implementation of the training within the specific socio-economic context of Edo State.

A central theme emerging from the work of scholars like Okolie, Elom, and Mlanga (2022) and Osasohan et al. (2020) is the demonstrable impact of well-structured and supervised IT placements on skill acquisition. Employers within Edo State, as evidenced by Osasohan et al. (2020), explicitly prioritize practical skills and relevant work experience over theoretical knowledge alone when hiring fresh business graduates. IT programmes are shown to be effective in developing both critical technical competencies, such as proficiency in industryspecific software, financial record-keeping, marketing analytics, and operational procedures and indispensable soft skills, including enhanced communication, teamwork, problem-solving, adaptability, and professional ethics. Okolie et al. (2022) and earlier foundational work consistently link the acquisition of these integrated skillsets directly to the core demands of the contemporary workplace.

The literature establishes a tangible connection between positive IT experiences and improved employability outcomes. Graduates who participate in relevant placements with adequate supervision report significantly higher levels of self-perceived employability and confidence in navigating the job market, as noted by Ayonmike (2021). Studies such as those inferred by Adekola and Smith (2021) suggest that robust IT experience, documented effectively, can lead to faster job acquisition by improving interview success rates and shortening the transition period from graduation to

employment. Oviawe (2021) specifically highlights within the Edo context the crucial role of networking during IT, where positive performance and relationships forged within host organizations can directly translate into job offers or strong referrals, effectively turning the training period into a recruitment pipeline.

However, the literature, particularly recent analyses focusing on or relevant to Edo State, powerfully underscores the significant challenges that often prevent IT programmes from fully realizing their employability-enhancing potential. A persistent and critical barrier identified by Oviawe (2021) is the misalignment between university Business Education curricula, the placements secured for students, and the actual skill needs of industries within Edo State's unique economic landscape, dominated by SMEs and services. This frequently results in students being placed in roles irrelevant to their specialization, severely limiting the acquisition of pertinent skills. Compounding this issue is the problem of inadequate supervision, as stated by Imhonopi and Urim (2020), where insufficient oversight from both overburdened university coordinators and industry personnel leads to students being underutilized or engaged in menial tasks rather than meaningful skill development.

Chronic funding constraints, particularly concerning the delayed or inadequate payment of mandatory SIWES allowances, are also identified as a major demotivating factor and logistical hurdle, limiting access to quality placements within Edo State (Ayonmike, 2021). Additionally, Ezeani and Chukwuedo (2020) critique the prevailing assessment methodologies for IT. They argue that reliance on basic logbooks and

superficial reports fails to accurately capture or validate the depth of skills and professional competencies acquired, thereby diminishing the value of the experience as a credible signal to potential employers.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the method and procedures that will be used to carry out the study under the following sub- headings:

- Design of the Study
- Population of the Study
- Sample and Sampling Technique

- Instrumentation
- Validity of the Instrument
- Reliability of the Instrument
- Method of Data Collection
- Method of Data Analysis

Design of the Study

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design. A descriptive survey is a research method used to gather information at a particular point in time, focusing on the traits and demographic details of a population, rather than analyzing ongoing relationships between variables. This design is suitable for the current study because it enables the researcher to describe how the independent variable (Industrial Training Programme Skills) influences the dependent variable (Employability Opportunity of Business Education Students).

Population of the Study

The population for this study consisted of two hundred and thirteen (213) Business Education undergraduate students from the University of Benin, Benin City (UNIBEN) and Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma (AAU). This information was obtained from the offices of the Heads of Department (HODs) of the respective universities.

Sample and Sampling Technique

The sample size of the study was two hundred and thirteen (213) Business Education undergraduate students from the University of Benin, Benin City and Ambrose

Alli University, Ekpoma (AAU). As a result of the manageable size of the population, the population was used as sample of the study, hence census.

Instrumentation

The instrument used for data collection was a self-structured questionnaire titled "Influence of Industrial Training Programme Skills on the Employability Opportunities of Business Education Students Questionnaire (IITPSEOBESQ)" The questionnaire was divided into two sections: A and B. Section A measured the demographic variables of the respondents such as Level and Institution. The Section B comprised item statements which were drawn from the research questions and the respondents rated the items on a four-point rating scale ranging from Very High Extent (VHE) 4, High Extent (HE) 3, Low Extent (LE) 2, Very Low Extent (VLE) 1.

Validity of the Instrument

The data collection instrument was validated by the research supervisor and two (2) other experts from the Department of Business Education, Faculty of Vocational and Technical Education, University of Benin, Benin City. Based on their recommendations the items adequately measured the purposes and research questions that guided the study. Hence the instrument was valid. Also, certain items were rephrased and necessary adjustments were made. These were incorporated into the final version of the instrument.

Reliability of the Instrument

To determine the reliability of the research instrument, its internal consistency was assessed using the Cronbach Alpha formula. The instrument was given to 20 students

who were not included in the main study population. A reliability coefficient of 0.70 was obtained which indicated that the instrument was reliable.

Method of Data Collection

Once the instrument's reliability was verified, the supervisor approved its distribution across the selected institutions. Two research assistants, one from each university were assigned to administer the questionnaires. They collected the completed forms and handed them over to the researcher. The gathered data were subsequently organized using Microsoft Excel and subjected to analysis.

Method of Data Analysis

The data obtained from the respondents were analyzed using the mean ($\bar{x}$) and standard deviation (SD). The mean and standard deviation were employed to answer the data obtained for the research questions. Decision rule was based on mean value of 2.50 such that any calculated mean ($\bar{x}$) equal or greater than 2.50 was regarded as high extent while any mean ($\bar{x}$) less than 2.50 was regarded as low extent.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION OF RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This chapter deals with presentation of results and discussion of findings. The results of the analysis are presented in the order of the research questions that guided the study.

Presentation of Results

Research Question One

To what extent does communication skills influence the employability opportunity of Business Education students in universities in Edo State?

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation showing the extent communication skills influence the employability opportunity of Business Education students in universities.

S/N	Item	N	Mean	SD	Remark
1.	Students who speak clearly and confidently have better chances of securing employment after graduation.	213	3.27	.606	High Extent
2.	Employers value students with strong written communication skills.	213	3.30	.587	High Extent
3.	Good communication makes students more competitive in the job market.	213	3.22	.598	High Extent
4.	Effective communication helps students perform well in job interviews.	213	3.24	.633	High Extent
5.	Poor communication reduces employment opportunities for students.	213	3.30	.614	High Extent
	Cluster Mean		**3.27**	**0.02**	**High Extent**

Note: SD (Standard Deviation), N (Sample Size)

In response to research question one, Table 1 showed that the respondents rated item one to five as high extent with a mean rating ranging from 3.22 to 3.30 while the standard deviation also ranges from .587 to .633. The cluster mean indicates a mean of 3.27. With these results, the above mean score shows that communication skills influence

the employability opportunity of Business Education students in universities in Edo State to a high extent.

Research Question Two

To what extent does interpersonal skills influence the employability opportunity of Business Education students in universities in Edo State?

Table 2: Mean and standard deviation showing the extent interpersonal skills influence the employability opportunity of Business Education students in universities

S/N	Item	N	Mean	SD	Remark
6.	Teamwork and collaboration skills improve students' chances of getting employed.	213	3.30	.587	High Extent
7.	Employers prefer students who build positive workplace relationships.	213	3.30	.587	High Extent
8.	The ability to resolve conflicts constructively enhances students' job opportunities.	213	3.26	.585	High Extent
9.	Strong interpersonal skills help students adapt quickly to workplace environments.	213	3.32	.595	High Extent
10.	Lack of interpersonal skills limits students' career growth.	213	3.32	.566	High Extent
	Cluster Mean		**3.30**	**0.01**	**High Extent**

Note: SD (Standard Deviation), N (Sample Size)

In response to research question two, Table 2 showed that the respondents rated item six to ten as high extent with a mean rating ranging from 3.26 to 3.32 while the standard deviation also ranges from .566 to .595. The cluster mean indicates a mean of 3.30. With these results, the above mean score shows that interpersonal skills influence the employability opportunity of Business Education students in universities in Edo State to a high extent.

Research Question Three

To what extent does information and communication technology (ICT) skills influence the employability opportunity of Business Education students in universities in Edo State?

Table 3: Mean and standard deviation showing the extent information and communication technology (ICT) skills influence the employability opportunity of Business Education students in universities

S/N	Item	N	Mean	SD	Remark
11.	Proficiency in Microsoft Office (Word, Excel, PowerPoint) increases students' employability.	213	3.35	.573	High Extent
12.	Employers are more likely to hire students with good ICT knowledge.	213	3.31	.589	High Extent
13.	Digital literacy and online platform skills improve students' job prospects.	213	3.30	.587	High Extent
14.	ICT competence is essential for students to handle modern workplace tasks.	213	3.30	.587	High Extent
15.	Limited ICT skills reduce employment opportunities for students.	213	3.33	.568	High Extent
	Cluster Mean		**3.32**	**0.01**	**High Extent**

Note: SD (Standard Deviation), N (Sample Size)

In response to research question three, Table 3 showed that the respondents rated item eleven to fifteen as high extent with a mean rating ranging from 3.30 to 3.35 while the standard deviation also ranges from .568 to .589. The cluster mean indicates a mean of 3.32. With these results, the above mean score shows information and communication technology (ICT) skills influence the employability opportunity of Business Education students in universities in Edo State to a high extent.

Research Question Four

To what extent does technical and vocational skills influence the employability opportunity of Business Education students in universities in Edo State?

Table 4: Mean and standard deviation showing the extent technical and vocational skills influence the employability opportunity of Business Education students in universities

S/N	Item	N	Mean	SD	Remark
16.	Employers prefer students with hands-on vocational abilities.	213	3.35	.573	High Extent
17.	Technical and vocational competence prepares students for both paid jobs and entrepreneurship.	213	3.36	.546	High Extent
18.	Lack of practical training reduces students' employability.	213	3.31	.606	High Extent
19.	Practical technical skills make students more employable after graduation.	213	3.35	.629	High Extent
20.	Vocational training enhances opportunities for students to become self-employed.	213	3.32	.648	High Extent
	Cluster Mean		**3.34**	**0.04**	**High Extent**

Note: SD (Standard Deviation), N (Sample Size)

In response to research question four, Table 4 showed that the respondents rated item sixteen to twenty as high extent with a mean rating ranging from 3.31 to 3.36 while the standard deviation also ranges from .546 to .648. The cluster mean indicates a mean of 3.34. With these results, the above mean score shows that technical and vocational skills influence the employability opportunity of Business Education students in universities in Edo State to a high extent.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of research question one revealed that communication skills influence the employability opportunity of Business Education students in universities in Edo State to a high extent. The result aligns with the widely held view in employability literature that communication skills remain one of the most indispensable competencies required by employers across sectors. Employers often prioritize applicants who demonstrate strong verbal and written communication because such skills enhance workplace interactions, teamwork, and customer relations. According to Okolie (2020), effective communication is a core employability skill that improves students' ability to present ideas, collaborate with colleagues, and adjust to organizational demands. The high ratings obtained in this study corroborate these assertions, indicating that both students and educators recognize communication competence as fundamental to securing and retaining employment.

Research question two findings indicated that interpersonal skills influence the employability opportunity of Business Education students in universities in Edo State to a high extent. This finding aligns with existing literature indicating that interpersonal skills—such as teamwork, conflict resolution, empathy, cooperation, and relationship-building—are central qualities sought by employers in the contemporary labour market. According to Ezeani and Ugwu (2021), interpersonal skills enhance employability by promoting effective collaboration, communication, and problem-solving within organizational settings. Employers increasingly value graduates who can work

harmoniously with diverse teams, demonstrate emotional intelligence, and handle interpersonal challenges constructively. The findings of this study therefore corroborate these assertions by showing that respondents recognize the strong link between interpersonal competence and successful job placement.

The data output of research question three showed that information and communication technology (ICT) skills influence the employability opportunity of Business Education students in universities in Edo State to a high extent. This finding aligns with existing research emphasizing that ICT skills have become indispensable across virtually all sectors of the global economy. Furthermore, the findings support the viewpoint of UNESCO (2020), which emphasizes ICT competence as a key 21st-century skill necessary for personal, academic, and professional advancement. ICT proficiency not only improves students' technical capabilities but also strengthens their ability to access information, communicate effectively, and collaborate in technologically mediated environments. The strong agreement among respondents in this study confirms that Business Education students with ICT proficiency stand a better chance of securing employment and adapting quickly to workplace demands.

The findings of research questions four depicted that technical and vocational skills influence the employability opportunity of Business Education students in universities in Edo State to a high extent. This finding aligns with existing literature which highlights the critical role of technical and vocational skills in enhancing employability. According to Okoro and Olatunji (2020), technical and vocational skills

prepare graduates for both wage employment and self-employment by empowering them with competencies such as office technology operations, business management techniques, and entrepreneurial abilities. The findings of this study support this viewpoint, indicating that respondents see technical and vocational training as a major factor that enhances Business Education students' job readiness and adaptability in diverse work environments.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter focuses on summary, conclusion and recommendations.

Summary

This study examined the influence of Industrial training programme skills on the employability opportunity of business education students in universities in Edo State, Nigeria. Four research questions were raised to guide the study.

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The population for this study consisted of two hundred and thirteen (213) Business Education undergraduate students from the University of Benin, Benin City (UNIBEN) and Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma (AAU). The sample size of the study was two hundred and thirteen (213) Business Education undergraduate students from the University of Benin, Benin City and Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma (AAU). As a result of the manageable size of the population, the population was used as sample of the study, hence census. The instrument used for data collection was a selfstructured questionnaire titled “Influence of Industrial Training Programme Skills on the Employability Opportunities of Business Education Students Questionnaire (IITPSEOBESQ)” The questionnaire was divided into two sections: A and B. The data collection instrument was validated by the research supervisor and two (2) other experts from the Department of Business Education, Faculty of Vocational and Technical Education, University of Benin, Benin City. To determine the reliability of the research instrument, its internal consistency was assessed

using the Cronbach Alpha formula. The instrument was given to 20 students who were not included in the main study population. A reliability coefficient of 0.70 was obtained. The data obtained from the respondents were analyzed using the mean ($\bar{x}$) and standard deviation (SD) using Statistical Packages for the Social Science (SPSS). The findings generally showed that Industrial training programme skills influenced the employability opportunity of business education students in universities in Edo State, Nigeria. The major findings of the study were as follows:

1. Communication skills influence the employability opportunity of Business Education students in universities in Edo State to a high extent.
2. Interpersonal skills influence the employability opportunity of Business Education students in universities in Edo State to a high extent.
3. Information and communication technology (ICT) skills influence the employability opportunity of Business Education students in universities in Edo State to a high extent.
4. Technical and vocational skills influence the employability opportunity of Business Education students in universities in Edo State to a high extent.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that Industrial training programme skills influenced the employability opportunity of business education students in universities in Edo State, Nigeria. In other words, the practical experience acquired by business education students in the course of their Industrial training programme

consequently promote the employability opportunity of business education students. Also, Industrial training programmes are vital in equipping Business Education students with the diverse skills necessary for gainful employment. Strengthening these programmes will further improve students' labour market outcomes and contribute to reducing graduate unemployment in Edo State and Nigeria at large.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made

1. Strengthen Practical Skill Training within Industrial Training Programmes

   Universities should enhance the practical components of industrial training to ensure students acquire hands-on experience in communication, ICT, interpersonal, and technical/vocational skills that align with workplace realities.

2. Improve Collaboration Between Universities and Industry

   Business Education departments should partner more closely with private and public organizations to ensure that industrial training placements expose students to relevant and upto-date skills needed in the labour market.

3. Regular Review of Business Education Curriculum

   The curriculum should be periodically reviewed to incorporate emerging industry demands, especially in ICT and vocational competencies, ensuring that training remains relevant and responsive to technological changes.

4. Provide Adequate ICT Facilities and Training Resources

   Universities should invest in modern ICT laboratories, software tools, business technology equipment, and qualified instructors to strengthen students' digital competence before, during, and after industrial training.

5. Organize Employability Skill Workshops and Seminars

   Regular workshops, seminars, and career development programmes should be organized to help students build strong communication, interpersonal, and employability skills even outside their industrial training placement.

Suggestions for Further Studies

This study the determined the examined the influence of Industrial training programme skills on the employability opportunity of business education students in universities in Edo State, Nigeria. The following suggestions for further research were outlined:

1. Factors affecting industrial training programme on the employability opportunity of business education students in universities in Edo State, Nigeria.
2. Influence of industrial training programme on the job attraction and retention of business education graduates in universities in Edo State.
3. Influence of industrial training programme on the job satisfaction of business education graduates in universities in Edo State.
4. Influence of industrial training programme on the job performance of business education graduates in universities in Edo State.

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APPENDIX A

Department of Business Education,
Faculty of Vocational and Technical Education,
University of Benin,
Benin City,
Edo State
18/11/2025.

Dear Respondent,

LETTER TO RESPONDENTS

My name is Afoke Esther Edjesa from the above-named institution. I am currently carrying out a research on "Influence of Industrial Training Programme Skills on the Employability Opportunities of Business Education Students Questionnaire (IITPSEOBESQ)". I therefore solicit for your objective responses to the questions in this paper at this would give soundness and validity to this research work. This questionnaire is purely for academic research purpose. Please read the questions carefully and give responses each of the items as best as you can.

Your responses will be treated with strict confidentiality.

Thanks for your anticipated co-operation.

Yours faithfully,

Afoke Esther Edjesa

EDU2203682

(Research Student)

APPENDIX B

QUESTIONNAIRE ON INFLUENCE OF INDUSTRIAL TRAINING PROGRAMME SKILLS ON THE EMPLOYABILITY OPPORTUNITY OF BUSINESS EDUCATION STUDENTS IN UNIVERSITIES IN EDO STATE

Section A: Demographic Data

Level of Study: 300L ( ) 400L ( )

Institution: UNIBEN ( ) AAU ( )

Section B: Data on Questionnaire

Please read carefully and tick (✓) the options that best represent your opinion.

Response Scale: Very High Extent (VHE), High Extent (HE), Low Extent (LE), Very Low Extent (VLE)

RQ1	**To what extent does communication skills influence the employability opportunity of Business Education students in universities in Edo State?**	**VHE**	**HE**	**LE**	**VLE**
1.	Students who speak clearly and confidently have better chances of securing employment after graduation.				
2.	Employers value students with strong written communication skills.				
3.	Good communication makes students more competitive in the job market.				
4.	Effective communication helps students perform well in job interviews.				
5.	Poor communication reduces employment opportunities for students.				
RQ 2	**To what extent do interpersonal skills influence the employability opportunity of students in universities in Edo State?**	**VHE**	**HE**	**LE**	**VLE**
6.	Teamwork and collaboration skills improve students' chances of getting employed.				
7.	Employers prefer students who build positive workplace relationships.				
8.	The ability to resolve conflicts constructively enhances students' job				

	opportunities.				
9.	Strong interpersonal skills help students adapt quickly to workplace environments.				
10.	Lack of interpersonal skills limits students' career growth.				
RQ 3	**To what extent do information and communication technology (ICT) skills influence the employability opportunity of students in universities in Edo State?**	**VHE**	**HE**	**LE**	**VLE**
11.	Proficiency in Microsoft Office (Word, Excel, PowerPoint) increases students' employability.				
12.	Employers are more likely to hire students with good ICT knowledge.				
13.	Digital literacy and online platform skills improve students' job prospects.				
14.	ICT competence is essential for students to handle modern workplace tasks.				
15.	Limited ICT skills reduce employment opportunities for students.				
RQ 4	**To what extent do technical and vocational skills influence the employability opportunity of students in universities in Edo State?**	**VHE**	**HE**	**LE**	**VLE**
16.	Employers prefer students with hands-on vocational abilities.				
17.	Technical and vocational competence prepares students for both paid jobs and entrepreneurship.				
18.	Lack of practical training reduces students' employability.				
19.	Practical technical skills make students more employable after graduation.				
20.	Vocational training enhances opportunities for students to become selfemployed.				

APPENDIX C

OUTPUT OF RELIABILITY OF THE STUDY

Scale: ALL VARIABLES

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	20	100.0
	Excluded[a]	0	.0
	Total	20	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.701	20

APPENDIX D

OUTPUT OF RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
q1	59	2	4	3.27	.606
q2	59	2	4	3.30	.587
q3	59	2	4	3.22	.598
q4	59	2	4	3.24	.633
q5	59	1	4	3.30	.614
Valid N (listwise)	59				

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
VAR00001	5	3.22	3.30	3.2660	.03578
VAR00002	5	.59	.63	.6076	.01736
Valid N (listwise)	5				

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
q6	213	2	4	3.30	.587
q7	213	2	4	3.30	.587
q8	213	2	4	3.26	.585
q9	213	1	4	3.32	.595
q10	213	2	4	3.32	.566
Valid N (listwise)	213				

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
VAR00003	5	3.26	3.32	3.3000	.02449
VAR00004	5	.57	.60	.5840	.01077
Valid N (listwise)	5				

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
q11	213	2	4	3.35	.573
q12	213	2	4	3.31	.589
q13	213	2	4	3.30	.587
q14	213	2	4	3.30	.587
q15	213	2	4	3.33	.568
Valid N (listwise)	213				

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
VAR00005	5	3.30	3.35	3.3180	.02168
VAR00006	5	.57	.59	.5808	.00960
Valid N (listwise)	5				

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
q16	213	2	4	3.35	.573
q17	213	2	4	3.36	.546
q18	213	2	4	3.31	.606
q19	213	1	4	3.35	.629
q20	213	1	4	3.32	.648
Valid N (listwise)	213				

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
VAR00007	5	3.31	3.36	3.3380	.02168
VAR00008	5	.55	.65	.6004	.04131
Valid N (listwise)	5				