

## Assessment of Small Scale Business Skills Acquired by Business Students in the North-Central Polytechnics, Nigeria

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### **Abstract**

*This study on assessment of small scale business skills acquired by business students in polytechnics in North Central, Nigeria is aimed at identifying the extent to which business students acquire small scale business skills in order to become self reliant. The study was carried out using 316 business students in ten Polytechnics in North-Central, Nigeria. The population was 316 out of which 153 were used as sample using proportionate stratified random sampling technique. Three research questions and two null hypotheses guided the study. The study adopted survey research design. A 31-item structured questionnaire, based on 5-points rating scale was used as an instrument for data collection. The questionnaire was face validated by two experts. Cronbach Alpha coefficient measure of internal consistency was used to measure the internal consistency which yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.83, signifying that the instrument was reliable. The data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation to answer the three research questions while the null hypotheses were tested using t-test at 0.05 level of significance. The findings of the study revealed that business students acquire management skills, human relation skills and technical skills to a low extent. It was recommended among others that institutions should continue to inculcate the skills in the students to enable them become self-reliant and also reduces unemployment in Nigeria.*

**Key words:** *Small Scale Business, Skill, Business, Polytechnics.*

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### **Introduction**

Small scale business, small scale industries and small scale entrepreneurship are used interchangeably to mean a small scale industry firm. In Nigeria and worldwide, there seems to be no specific definition of small business. Different authors, scholars, and schools have different ideas as to the differences in capital outlay, number of employees, sales turnover, fixed capital investment, available plant and machinery, market share and the level of development. These features equally vary from one country to the other. Defining small scale business is necessarily arbitrary because people adapt particular standard for particular purpose (Umeh in Ezeahurukwe and Omale 2018).

Small scale business is a source of livelihood to many people in Nigeria. Kehinde et al (2016) defined small scale enterprise as a privately owned and operated business, characterized by a small

number of employees and low turnout. In addition, Ogbe (2017) stated that Small scale industries are businesses owned by individuals called sole proprietors. It could be owned by a group of friends who form partnership for the purpose of trading, sharing their profits and losses in proportion of their subscribed capitals. People require food, clothing and shelter if they are to keep themselves alive.

The Nigeria Industrial Development Bank (NIDB) defined small scale business as enterprises with project cost not exceeding seven hundred and fifty thousand naira. The Central Bank of Nigeria addresses the small scale business from assessing its annual turnover while the Federal Ministry of Commerce and Industry looks at the total investment or working capital to classify size of business. The United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) is more concerned on the number of employees a business has, to determine its size. Also, the Small and Medium Industries and Equity Investment Scheme defined small and Medium Enterprises with a maximum asset-base of two hundred million naira (N200,000,000) excluding land and working capital and the number of employees from 100-300 (Hussain in Ezeahurukwe and Omale 2018).

Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) have been billed as the building blocks of any economy as they play major roles in employment generation, rural development, youth empowerment, with major contribution to national income and growth. A country's economic strength and vitality, its productivity and international competitiveness, depends on its capacity to build and maintain a quality workforce. The acquisition of skills depends on the type of education and the method of delivery of such education. As part of government commitment to empower individuals with skills, educational sector was given prominent attention for self-reliance. The federal government of Nigeria recognized skills acquisition and development as an important factor in the drive to enhance productivity, reduce youth unemployment and achieve sustainable economic development (Nwaukwa, Iloeje, Nzeh & Nwagu, 2018). Similarly, Abah (2016) posited that the aim of various governments to eradicate poverty and increase the standard of living of citizens through the establishment of poverty reduction programmes have failed due to lack of entrepreneurship skills by graduates of the educational system. The author observed that millions of jobs are waiting to be done because people with the right education and training cannot be found. The acquisition of relevant skills is a tool of increasing and boosting the productive power-base of the nation. Enang and Okute (2019) stated that skills and knowledge are the engines of economic growth and social development of any nation.

Several attempts are being made through researches, seminars, workshops, conferences, and programmes in institutions of learning and in research development centers for the purpose of developing entrepreneurial skills and culture among the youths. This, according to Aladejebi (2018), is linked to the inability of graduates to stand on their own and be self employed after school. This could be seen in the high rate of unemployment among tertiary institution graduates. This is an unfortunate situation as most youths who are supposed to be productive and active members of the society become beggars, moving from one part of the town, state and country to another in search of greener pastures for which they are ill equipped (Njoku, Nwachukwu & Uchendu, 2020).

Nepal and Maharjan (2015) noted that in developing countries like Nigeria, low quality of learning among students can partly be attributed to inadequate of human and physical resources in schools. Additionally, Okpuzor (2012) stated that the shortage of resources affect the quality of teaching and learning in business education programme. Quality diminishes when the resources needed for teaching and learning are adequate or not available. The detrimental effect of this is that business students performs far below expectation and lack necessary skills and competencies for gainful employment or self employment after graduation. It is becoming increasingly imperative that individuals be equipped with self sustaining capabilities especially now that the Nigerian economy is moving towards a direction where only individuals who are self reliant can really survive. Entrepreneurship education as introduced in tertiary institutions in Nigeria by the Nigerian Federal

Government, is expected to inculcate in students the practical skills and experience needed to be self-employed and be self-reliant, through the management of small-scale businesses. To this end, technical training institutions like Polytechnics and other training providers must empower their trainees with the needed entrepreneurial skills that will enable them to be self-employed and to fit into the modern world of Work.

Business studies is a component of the umbrella business education. Equipping students with relevant skills is an important mandate of business education programme. This is stated in the policy statement of National Policy on Education (FRN, 2013) that the primary aim of business education is to produce skillful and dynamic business education graduates for gainful employment or self-employment. In line with the policy objective, Ohaka & Bupo (2019), Ohaka & Onuoha (2017), Akpomi & Ohaka (2019) asserted that business education is an aspect of general education that is predicated on equipping its target audience with distinctive skills, knowledge, aptitude and attitudes requisite for occupational competence in the areas of education and business. Business education refers to a programme of instruction that offers various skills in accounting, marketing and office technology and management.

Arising from the authors view, it is obvious that Business students, both male and female, are not left out in the drive towards self-reliance as a utilitarian programme of studies. Therefore, Business students are required to be equipped with the relevant skills and competencies to make them self-reliant on graduation and/or put them at vantage position for paid-employment in the Nigerian economy.

Polytechnic education is one of the tertiary levels of education given after secondary school. Polytechnic institutions are largely owned by both federal and state governments. Federal owned polytechnics are those polytechnics owned, financed and managed by the federal government while the state polytechnics are those polytechnics owned, financed and managed by state governments. Ndinechi and Gude (2014) posited that it is a two tier programme of studies that consist of National Diploma (ND) and Higher National Diploma (HND) with one year industrial experience as one of the pre-requisites for HND programme. The objectives of polytechnic education, as stated in the National Policy on Education (FRN,2009), are to provide full-time course of instructions and training in engineering, other technologies, applied sciences, business and management leading to the production of trained manpower, to provide the technical knowledge and skills necessary for occupational development in Nigeria as well as to give training and impart necessary skills for the production of skilled personnel who shall be enterprising. The National Policy on Education emphasized a united, strong and self reliant nation. It further stressed the need for acquisition of appropriate knowledge and skills necessary for securing paid employment in an establishment or be self-employed. Therefore, the well cherished objectives of tertiary education cannot be achieved if emphasis is not laid on the importance of small scale business skills acquisition.

Polytechnic education as tertiary institution of learning, are vested with the responsibility of providing skilled and high level workforce for the economy. This institution is expected to be geared towards producing graduates who are significantly relevant to the society and economy at large. These graduates, especially business students are supposed to be able to make use of the knowledge and skills acquired to alter and shape the environment while creating jobs that will empower others. Business students in polytechnics upon graduation are supposed to be job creators, but contrary to this expectation, most of them roam the streets for years searching for very scarce white-collar jobs. This is because they are inadequately equipped with relevant skills, probably due to the fact that business education programme is not up-to-date with required resources (human and physical) as found in the programme in other parts of developed countries. When there are shortage of resources in business education programme there is a huge gap in area of skill acquisition (Ndubuisi, Ezeani & Ile, 2020).

Promoting small-scale business management skill development through entrepreneurship education is directly related to improving general living conditions and human rights. Entrepreneurship education prepares individuals not only to be gainfully employed but also to be self-employed and be employers of labour. The higher educational programmes in Nigeria has fallen short of expectations, and as a result, many of the graduates of these institutions lack basic skills required by the labour market. The short fall in required basic skills has also resulted in mass unemployment among the graduates (Etonyeaku, Kanu, Ezeji & Chukwuma, 2014). In support of this view, Nwagu and Nwauka (2016) stated that many problems such as inadequate funding, insufficient ICT resources, poor business education industry partnership, and lack of qualified and committed business educators hinder business education from equipping students with relevant skills. In agreement, Okiridu, Azuma and Godspower (2017) asserted that inadequate funding has limited the capacity of universities in providing quality business education for students. The negative perceptions and attendant false impression of business education for skill development by the society and majority of business education students in particular is a pivotal impediment to practical skill development that must not be taken for granted by all relevant stakeholders in the field of education at all levels of education.

Skills for operating a business enterprise are needed for the business to succeed in the competitive market. Skill is the ability to do something well and is usually gained through training or experience. Skill does not depend solely upon a person's fundamental, innate capacities but must be developed through the training, practice and experience an individual acquired. Okoli in Ezenwafor & Olaniyi (2017) defined skills as the economic tools with which entrepreneurs acquire and solve societal problems. Skills are practical activities which make one employable, self-reliant and relevant to the society. Okoli further stated that entrepreneurs must possess these business skills that are necessary to enable them start their own business enterprises and market the products or services. Skills go a long way in helping entrepreneurs become successful. Similarly, Ejiogu (2018) defined skill as the art of possessing the ability, power, authority, or competency e.t.c. to do the task required of an individual on the job. Skills are those activities that will enable an entrepreneur to manage his own enterprise.

Acquisition of skills requires a specific and extended process of learning about an activity or occurrence. There are three levels to which skill acquisition can take place. At the first level, the learning of skills takes place cognitively as learners acquire guidance and improve their performance. at the second level, previously learned techniques that were previously studied are appropriately validated and reviewed based on the current scenario. The final stage is autonomous, the success plan at this stage or level is gradually getting more independent and less subject to executive influence or external intervention (Tsado in Utebor, 2020). From the preceding, it is clear that the process of skills acquisition entails that business teachers needed to have the necessary professional qualification and experience as well as the availability of teaching resources for ensuring quality education service delivery.

Invariably, when students are trained they become enriched in skills needed to meet up with a constantly evolving business environment which will perhaps promote employability and job creation through entrepreneurship business development. More so, business students are expected to have adequate small scale business skills such as management skills, technical skills and be good public relations officer.

Hence, management, in the perspective of this study, involves the art of planning, organizing, implementing and controlling human and material resources. Small scale business skill of management is highly required for any individual carrying out business activities. An understanding of the nature of management skills is necessary for effective direction of business enterprise and in achieving organizational objectives (Obunadike, 2013). In agreement with this, Okoli in Chinwe

(2020) opined that management is the process of working with and through others to effectively achieve the goals of the organization by efficiently exploiting the limited resources. Because of the complex nature of management, it is very necessary that business students acquire the skills of taking up such tasks of making good use of available resources and creating an enabling business environment on graduation.

Olaniyi (2016) posited that human relations skill is one of the most important factors in determining business success. These skills relate to social behaviour like human resource management. As key skills, most of them are associated with relationships. Externally, the entrepreneur tries to build and maintain relationships with people such as partners, clients, suppliers. Internally, the entrepreneur plays an important role in leading employees. In detail, a variety of skills have shown the importance of cooperation and trust, communication skills, hiring skills, delegation skills, control, negotiation, instituting effective culture, resolving disputes, and persuading (Kaur & Brains in Shenura, Haile & Negash, 2016).

Business students need to acquire technical skills in order to accomplish specific tasks in an organization. Technical skills are specific and specialized knowledge and analytical tools relevant to an entrepreneur's area of interest in business. According to Akarahu and Baba (2011), having job specific knowledge and techniques that are required to perform organizational role is necessary. According to Osamwoyin and Igbinosa in Ezenwafor and Olaniyi (2017), technical skills are related to knowledge and proficiency in activities involving processes, methods and procedures as well as the ability to use tools and specific techniques efficiently. Acquisition of these skills will enable business students to identify and exploit opportunities for the survival and success of business. It was against this background that this study was carried out to assess the small scale business skills acquired by business students in polytechnics in North Central, Nigeria.

### **Statement of problem**

Entrepreneurship education is a sort of intervention programme which was introduced into Nigeria's tertiary education sub-sector in 2006 to remedy the unemployment challenge; and redirect the attention of our youths/graduates towards job creation by instilling in them relevant entrepreneurial skills that will positively grow and develop the economy. The relevance of this programme in the curriculum of all tertiary institutions in Nigeria is geared towards creating an entrepreneurial culture and entrepreneurial spirits in the students but since the introduction of this programme, there seems to be increase in graduates' unemployment. Many graduates seem to be roaming the streets in search of white collar jobs despite governments' efforts to encourage entrepreneurship development in the educational system.

However, there have been arguments as to whether or not the entrepreneurship development introduced into the curriculum of Nigerian tertiary institutions is enough to impart in students, the needed small-scale management skills that will enable them set up their businesses after graduation.

It has been observed that Business students seem to lack the adequate skills required to successfully manage a business venture. This may be due to the fact they are inadequately equipped with relevant skills, probably due to the fact that business education programme is not up-to-date with required resources (human and physical) as found in the programme in other parts of developed countries. Hence many business graduates go into businesses without the required entrepreneurial skills and therefore do not thrive in business.

Consequently, business students are required to acquire skills in small scale business. But it is still unclear on the extent to which they acquire the necessary skills on graduation. Hence this study assess the extent of the acquisition of these skills.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The main objective of the study is to assess the small scale business skills acquired by business students in polytechnics in North-Central, Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. determine the management skills acquired by business students in polytechnics in North-Central, Nigeria .
2. determine the human relations skills possessed by business students in polytechnics in North-Central, Nigeria.
3. determine the technical skills possessed by business students in polytechnics in North-Central, Nigeria.

### **Research Questions**

1. To what extent do business students acquire management skills in polytechnics in North-Central, Nigeria?
2. To what extent do business students acquire human relations skills in polytechnics in North-Central, Nigeria?
3. To what extent do business students acquire technical skills in polytechnics in North-Central, Nigeria?

### **Statement of Hypotheses**

1. There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of business students in Federal and State owned Polytechnics on the extent they acquire small scale business skills in polytechnics in North-Central, Nigeria.
2. There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female business students on the extent they acquire small scale business skills in polytechnics in North-Central, Nigeria.

### **Research Methodology**

The study adopted a descriptive survey design. According to Saunders et al (2009), a survey design allows the collection of a large amount of data from sizeable population in a highly economical way usually involving the use of questionnaire administered on a sample. The population for the study comprised 316 Business students from 10 Polytechnics in North-Central, Nigeria. A sample size of 153 was drawn using proportionate stratified random sampling technique with the aid of Taro Yamane's statistical formula. A 31-item structured questionnaire was developed from the literature reviewed for the study and utilized for data collection. Each questionnaire item had a five point rating scale of Very High Extent (VHE=5), High Extent (HE=4), Moderate Extent (ME=3), Low Extent (LE=2) and Very Low Extent (VLE=1). Two experts face validated the instrument. Cronbach alpha coefficient measure of internal consistency was used to determine the reliability of the instrument and a coefficient of 0.83 was obtained. 153 copies of the questionnaire were administered to the respondents by the researcher with the help of two research assistants and 137 copies were duly completed and returned which gave a response rate of 90%. The data generated was analyzed through descriptive statistics of Mean and Standard deviation to answer the research questions. Inferential statistics (t-test) was employed to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. Any item with a mean scores and standard deviation < (below) 3.50 and 1.50 is regarded as low extent, a mean score < (below) 3.75 and standard deviation below 1.75 is regarded as moderate extent and a mean score  $\geq 3.75$  and standard deviation of 1.75 is considered as high extent. A skill item is significant if the t-calculated is equal or greater than the t-tab and was not significant if the t-calculated is less than the t-tabulated.

### **Data Analysis and Results**

The results of the analysis of data generated were presented and analyzed as follows:

#### **Research Question 1**

To what extent do business students acquire management skills in polytechnics in North Central, Nigeria?

The data answering research question one is presented in Table 1 below.

**Table 1: Mean ratings and standard deviations of the respondents on the management skills acquired by business students in polytechnics in North Central, Nigeria**

S/No	Items	Mean	SD	Decision
1.	Plan enterprise objectives	2.92	1.33	Low Extent
2.	Formulate policies, programmes and procedures for attainment of objectives	2.68	1.21	Low Extent
3.	Delegate authority to subordinate effectively	3.88	1.26	High Extent
4.	Determine the best way of arranging task and activities	2.67	1.41	Low Extent
5.	Organizing resources for optimizing performance	3.84	1.68	High Extent
6.	Utilize resources prudently	2.41	1.14	Low Extent
7.	Train and evaluate staff performance	3.93	1.72	High Extent
8.	Create suitable and conducive environment for work	2.53	1.14	Low Extent
9.	Establish structure and appraise the operating results	2.42	1.24	Low Extent
10.	Analyze and forecast the demand and supply of labour	2.38	1.21	Low Extent
11.	Utilize product promotion mix	3.57	1.44	High Extent
12.	Supervise and coordinate human resources effectively	2.41	1.32	Low Extent
<b>Grand Total</b>		<b>2.97</b>		<b>Low Extent</b>

**Source: Field Research (2021)**

Data in Table 1 revealed that the mean ratings for all the items except item numbers 3,5,7 and 11 ranged from 2.41 to 2.92 a grand mean of 2.97. This indicates that the respondents rated that business students acquire management skills to a low extent in polytechnics in North Central, Nigeria. The standard deviation for all the items are within the same range which implies that the respondents were homogeneous in their ratings.

#### **Research Question 2**

To what extent do business students acquire human relations skills in Polytechnics in North Central Nigeria?

The data answering research question two is presented in Table 2 below.

**Table 2: Mean ratings and standard deviations of the respondents on the human relations skills acquired by business students in Polytechnics in North Central, Nigeria.**

S/No.	Items	Mean	SD	Decision
13.	Develop good customer orientation for effective operation of relative network	2.82	1.13	Low Extent
14.	Communicate and persuade customers	3.51	1.42	High Extent
15.	Employ initiative and tact in dealing with public and customers	2.63	1.28	Low Extent
16.	Establish linkages with other business persons and stake holders for mutual learning and collaborative understanding	3.57	1.40	High Extent
17.	Listen to customers' complain	2.58	1.23	Low Extent
18.	Meet customers requirement	3.81	1.67	High Extent
19.	Manage conflict	2.42	1.14	Low Extent
20.	Strategize for workers welfare and motivation	2.68	1.24	Low Extent
21.	Influence the business environment (suppliers, competitors, worker, etc.)	3.60	1.33	High Extent
22.	Build team work among colleagues	2.55	1.31	Low Extent
23.	Employ initiative and tact in dealing with public and customers	2.72	1.22	Low Extent
<b>Grand Mean</b>		<b>2.90</b>		<b>Low Extent</b>

**Source: Field Research (2021)**

Data in Table 2 revealed that out of the 11 items, item numbers 13,15, 17,19,20,22 and 23 with means ranging from 2.42 to 2.82 fall within the range of low extent while the remaining four items item numbers 14,16,18 and 21 fall within the range of high extent. The grand mean of 2.90 indicates that respondents rated human relation skills at low extent in polytechnics in Polytechnics in North Central, Nigeria. The standard deviations for all the items are within the same range indicating that the respondents were homogeneous in their ratings.

**Table 3: Mean ratings and standard deviations of the respondents on the technical skills acquired by business students in Polytechnics in North Central, Nigeria**

S/No.	Items	Mean	SD	Decision
24.	Maintain office equipment	2.68	1.28	Low Extent
25.	Apply basic processing methods such as online interaction	2.49	1.30	Low Extent
26.	Send and receive electron mail (email) for clients	3.82	1.67	High extent
27.	Send fax messages for clients	2.31	1.32	Low Extent
28.	Apply academic background on business growth	2.42	0.83	Low Extent
29.	Operate office machines such as reprographic, scanning, shredding, etc.	2.71	1.21	Low Extent
30.	Copy file using window explorer	3.52	1.32	High Extent
31.	Browse and download information from the internet for clients	3.61	1.45	High Extent
<b>Grand Total</b>		<b>2.95</b>		<b>Low Extent</b>

**Sources: Field Research (2021)**

Table 3 showed that items 24, 25, 27, 28 and 29 with means ranging from 2.31 to 2.71 fall within the range of low extent. While 26, 30 and 31 fall within the range of high extent. The grand mean of 2.95 indicates that respondents rated technical skills at low extent in polytechnics in Polytechnics in North Central, Nigeria. The standard deviations for all the items are within the same range indicating that the respondents were homogeneous in their ratings.

### **Hypothesis 1**

There is no significance difference in the mean ratings of business students in federal and state owned polytechnics on the extent they acquire small scale business skills in Polytechnics in North Central, Nigeria.

**Table 4: t-test statistics on mean scores of business students in federal and state owned polytechnics on the extent of small scale business skills acquired in Polytechnics in North Central, Nigeria**

<b>Variables (Institutions)</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>df</b>	<b>t-cal</b>	<b>t-tab</b>	<b>Remark</b>
Federal	57	3.26	0.45	125	1.52	1.96	Accepted
State	69	3.73	0.54				

**Source: Field Research (2021)**

Data in Table 4 of the t-test analysis showed that the t-cal value of 1.52 is less than the t-critical value of 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance and 125 degree of freedom. Hence, the null hypothesis that there is no significance difference in the mean ratings of business students in federal and state owned polytechnics on the extent they acquire small scale business skills in polytechnics in North Central polytechnics, Nigeria is accepted.

### **Hypothesis 2**

There is no significance difference in the mean ratings of male and female business students on the extent they acquire small scale business skills in Polytechnics in North Central, Nigeria.

**Table 5: t-test statistics on mean scores between male and female business students on the extent of small scale business skills acquired in Polytechnics in North Central, Nigeria**

<b>Variables (Gender)</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>df</b>	<b>t-cal</b>	<b>t-tab</b>	<b>Remark</b>
Male	58	2.04	0.46	124	1.59	1.96	Accepted
Female	68	1.47	0.54				

**Source: Field Research (2021)**

Table 5 revealed that the t-cal value of 1.59 is less than the t-critical value of 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance and 124 degree of freedom. Hence, the null hypothesis that there is no significance difference in the mean ratings of male and female business students on the extent they acquire small scale business skills in polytechnics in North Central polytechnics, Nigeria is accepted.

### **Discussion of Findings**

Findings of the study revealed that business students in polytechnics in North Central Polytechnics, Nigeria acquire management skills for running a successful small scale business to a low extent. This is in line with the finding of Abah (2016) who observed that the aim of various governments to eradicate poverty and increase the standard of living of citizens through the establishment of poverty reduction programmes have failed due to lack of entrepreneurship skills by graduates of the educational system. The author observed that millions of jobs are waiting to be done because people with the right education and training cannot be found. This corroborates the result of a study carried out by Nepal and Maharjan (2015) who noted that in developing countries like Nigeria, low quality of learning among students can partly be attributed to inadequate of physical resources in schools. In agreement, Okpuzor (2012) stated that the shortage of resources affect the quality of teaching and learning in business education programme. Quality diminishes when the resources needed for teaching and learning are adequate or not available. The detrimental effect of this is that business students performs far below expectation and lack necessary skills and competencies for gainful employment or self employment after graduation. The finding of the study was that tertiary institutions in Nigeria do not adequately prepare graduates to be self-reliant.

The findings of the study also showed that business students in polytechnics in North Central Polytechnics, Nigeria acquire human relations skills for running a successful small scale business to a low extent. This is in agreement with the study of Olaniyi (2016) who posited that human relations skill is one of the most important factors in determining business success. These skills relate to social behaviour like human resource management. As key skills, most of them are associated with relationships. Externally, the entrepreneur tries to build and maintain relationships with people such as partners, clients, suppliers. Internally, the entrepreneur plays an important role in leading employees. The short fall in required basic skills has also resulted in mass unemployment among the graduates. The authors further pointed out that many business education graduates go into business without the required entrepreneurial skills and therefore do not do well in business. Similarly, Kaur and Brains in Shenura, Haile and Negash (2016) pointed out that there is a positive relationship between existence of skills and venture performance. The authors further stressed that entrepreneurship requires certain strategic skills for profitable functioning.

The findings further showed that business students in polytechnics in North Central Polytechnics, Nigeria has fallen short of expectations, and as a result, many of the graduates of these institutions lack basic skills (technical skills) required by the labour market. The short fall in required basic skills has also resulted in mass unemployment among the graduates (Etonyeaku, Kanu, Ezeji & Chukwuma, 2014). In support of this view, Nwagu and Nwauka (2016) stated that many problems such as inadequate funding, insufficient ICT resources, poor business education industry partnership, and lack of qualified and committed business educators hinder business education from equipping students with relevant skills. In agreement, Okiridu, Azuma and Godspower (2017) asserted that inadequate funding has limited the capacity of universities in providing quality business education for students. Technical skills and know-how are relevant and crucial to an entrepreneur's area of business interest for business success.

The findings further, indicated that the respondents from federal and state owned polytechnics did not differ significantly in their mean ratings on the extent small scale business skills are acquired by business students in polytechnics in North Central, Nigeria. this means that ownership of institutions did not affect the extent small scale business skills are acquired by business students in polytechnics in North Central, Nigeria.

Finally the findings showed that male and female respondents did not differ significantly in their mean ratings on the extent small scale business skills are acquired by business students in polytechnics in North Central, Nigeria. This means that acquisition of this skills are essential to all

business students (male and female). This makes one employable, self-reliant and relevant to the society.

### **Conclusion**

Small scale business skills refer to a variety of abilities in regards to venture success. Recently, there has been quite a lot of attention and enthusiasm for entrepreneurs to make their own start-up ventures. This led to the introduction of entrepreneurship development education curriculum in the Nigerian education system. The entrepreneurship education courses are integrated into higher education curricula to enable students acquire entrepreneurial skills for self reliance in view of the increasing unemployment in the society. It was discovered that management, human relations and technical skills are acquired to a low extent by business students in polytechnics in North Central, Nigeria, thus will not enable them to manage small scale enterprises successfully on graduation. Therefore, teaching these skills in the institutions must be done with high level of commitment and enthusiasm.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made.

1. Lecturers, Instructors and Facilitators teaching entrepreneurship and practical courses should ensure that these elements of small scale business skills are taught more vigorously to ensure that students graduate with the required skills that will enable them open, float and manage their own enterprises effectively.
2. The curriculum of existing entrepreneurship education should be reviewed to be more practical oriented and to reflect the skills identified in this research so as to equip students sufficiently to start and manage small scale enterprises when they graduate from tertiary institutions.
3. Relevant facilities, equipment and materials should be sufficiently supplied to departments teaching these courses to enhance effective teaching and learning of these skills.

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