STANDARD VALUES AND GENERIC SKILLS ACQUISITION AMONG SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN AKWA IBOM NORTH EAST SENATORIAL DISTRICT, NIGERIA

[1]Mfoniso Edet Tom, [2]Theresa N. Amah and [2]Atim Christopher Etor

[1]Department of Social Studies/Citizenship Education,
Faculty of Education, University of Uyo,
Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria

[2]Department of Social Studies,
Akwa Ibom State College of Education,
Afaha Nsit, Akwa Ibom State

Abstract

This study examined the relationship between standard values and generic skills acquisition among senior secondary school students in Akwa Ibom North East Senatorial District, Nigeria. Five research questions and five hypotheses guided the study using a correlational research design. The population comprised 20,272 senior secondary two (SS2) students from 89 public secondary schools. A sample of 378 students was selected through multi-stage sampling procedure including systematic random sampling of four Local Government Areas and balloting method for 18 schools and 21 students per school. The researcher-developed "Standard Values and Generic Skills Acquisition Questionnaire (SVGSAQ)" was validated by three experts and achieved reliability coefficients of 0.79 (independent variables) and 0.82 (dependent variable) using Cronbach Alpha statistics. Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis revealed very high positive and significant relationships between cooperation (r=0.82), commitment (r=0.74), self-determination (r=0.79) and generic skills acquisition, while passion (r=0.64) and obedience (r=0.61) showed high positive and significant relationships. The study concluded that students who cultivate standard values are more likely to acquire generic skills essential for employment. Recommendations include encouraging student commitment to studies, fostering cooperative learning environments, and strengthening value orientation in secondary education.

Keywords: *Standard values, generic skills acquisition, cooperation, commitment, self-determination, secondary school students, Nigeria*

Introduction

Generic skills represent important job-related competencies required for employees in the 21st century workplace. These skills enable individuals to become and remain employable throughout their lifetime while leading to productive and prosperous lives (Rayner & Papakonstantinou, 2015). In the contemporary labour market, employers expect prospective employees to demonstrate teamwork, problem-solving abilities, decision-making capacity, effective communication, and the capacity to deal with non-routine tasks—all components of generic skills.

Secondary school education plays a vital role in developing the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values of youths for an inclusive and sustainable future. Recognizing this critical function, Nigeria diversified her secondary school curriculum to integrate academic knowledge with generic skills, thereby equipping students with relevant competencies for self-employment and productivity in the labour market (Olokundun et al., 2014). Aja-Okorie and Adali (2013) strongly recommended that Nigeria should widen

her curriculum by incorporating generic skills so that young ones can imbibe novel competencies needed for self-employment as well as meet organizational work demands.

Generic skills are transferable, high-order skills needed for students to function effectively when performing jobs after graduation. Hadiyan and Mohammed (2013) defined generic skills as employability skills, qualities, and traits expected of individuals to succeed in their studies and careers. Examples include communication skills, problem-solving, teamwork, time-management, networking, marketing, numerical skills, creative thinking, and innovation. George (2011) asserted that working in teams, communicating clearly, personal and interpersonal skills, problem-solving, ICT literacy, and using mathematical concepts efficiently are work-related generic skills required for the job market alongside academic exploits.

Despite the high demand for graduates with outstanding academic achievements and desired generic skills, most secondary schools focus on traditional core subjects to provide broader knowledge while generic skills receive little attention. This approach creates a gap whereby graduates may obtain higher academic achievements without acquiring crucial employability skills (Hadiyanto& Ibrahim, 2013). Graduates need to be competitive and marketable for employment, and academic achievement alone does not sufficiently reflect other skills required for the job market.

The most effective way of acquiring generic skills is for students to imbibe standard values, which are crucial in individual and societal development. The quality of secondary school instruction must be oriented towards inculcating values that promote generic skills acquisition, abilities, and competences for self-reliance. If students' socialization impacts negative value orientation towards generic skills, youths become less interested and motivated towards self-employment, resulting in increased poverty and unemployment (Whiston, 2012).

Cooperation is one of the most fundamental standard values needed for students to possess generic skills. George (2011) maintained that cooperation involves working together to achieve common, mutual benefits. To facilitate generic skills acquisition, students need to work together with teachers and remain committed to learning. Johnson and Johnson (2014) stated that students' cooperation with teachers within classroom contexts can facilitate possession of generic skills for self-employment and employability.

Commitment towards learning is essential for students who want to possess generic skills to obtain and sustain employment. Committed students exercise sincere willingness and dedication to academic work with the aim of acquiring generic skills that promote employability. Parente and Feola (2013) emphasized that commitment is crucial for students wishing to acquire generic skills. Students with strong commitment show significant motivation, willingness, and strong desire to participate in academic activities that enhance generic skills acquisition.

Passion may be essential for acquiring generic competencies the feeling of strong attraction and emotional attachment to academic activities. Students passionate about acquiring generic skills invest time and dedication towards learning. Pawan et al. (2017) noted that intense passion for academic activities with the intent of receiving gainful employment can fuel serious drive, tenacity, and willingness to acquire generic skills.

Obedience to rules or instructions issued by authority figures is vital in students' acquisition of generic skills. As part of school regulations, students must stay in class and take active part in learning processes aimed at providing secondary school leavers with requisite technological knowledge and vocational skills for self-reliance (Ukpabio & Etor, 2016).

Self-determination influences students' acquisition of generic skills or competencies the individual's sense of having choice in initiating and regulating actions. Students possessing great self-determination are usually delighted towards creative ideas and business dealings, ready to engage actively in learning processes, tolerate difficulties, unleash innovative abilities, and demonstrate personal autonomy towards generic skills acquisition, (Muller et al., 2011).

Statement of the Problem

Standard values and generic skills acquisition are key factors for Nigeria's economic and social development. Values such as cooperation, passion, obedience, self-determination, and commitment are essential if secondary school students are to acquire generic skills that will help them take advantage of employment opportunities. Despite this recognized importance, before and after graduation, most secondary school students seem not to acquire needed generic skills for self and organizational development. This is evident in the increasing condition of secondary school leavers not being able to obtain and sustain employment.

Such conditions may result from students' failure to work together with teachers, obey school rules, and remain committed to learning. Sometimes students leave school communities to gallivant with friends while others engage actively in learning processes. Such behaviour may be attributed to students not seeing academic tasks as passionate and rewarding activities. The acquisition of generic skills for job placement may be difficult to achieve if students do not make increased efforts, motivation, and determination towards academic work.

Though the Federal Government, through the Federal Health Management Board, has been encouraging generic skills acquisition for self and national development, many secondary school leavers seem not to grasp opportunities for gainful employment due to poor generic skills acquisition. The researcher observed that some empirical articles relating to this study were conducted in different study areas using variables different from the present study. The inability of secondary school students to acquire generic skills has continuously compounded into increased unemployment, political thuggery among youths, cultism, armed robbery, and kidnapping. This happens because most students could not acquire requisite skills important for starting businesses or receiving gainful employment. Therefore, these problems motivated this investigation.

Purpose of the Study

The major objective of this study is to determine the relationship between standard values and generic skills acquisition among senior secondary school students in Akwa Ibom. Specifically, the study sought to determine the relationship between:

i. Cooperation and generic skills acquisition
ii. Commitment and generic skills acquisition
iii. Passion and generic skills acquisition
iv. Obedience and generic skills acquisition
v. Self-determination and generic skills acquisition

Research Questions

i. What is the relationship between cooperation and generic skills acquisition among senior secondary school students?

ii. What relationship exists between commitment and generic skills acquisition among senior secondary school students?

iii. What is the relationship between passion and generic skills acquisition among senior secondary school students?

iv. What relationship exists between obedience and generic skills acquisition among senior secondary school students?

v. What is the relationship between self-determination and generic skills acquisition among senior secondary school students?

Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at .05 level of significance:

i. There is no significant relationship between cooperation and generic skills acquisition.
ii. There is no significant relationship between commitment and generic skills acquisition.
iii. There is no significant relationship between passion and generic skills acquisition.
iv. There is no significant relationship between obedience and generic skills acquisition.
v. There is no significant relationship between self-determination and generic skills acquisition.

Literature Review

Conceptual Framework

Standard Values

Standard values are cognitive principles that direct and guide preferences in human life and are socially accepted by society (Cooper, 2014). They reflect the importance, worth, desirability, and respect individuals have for something. Standard values guide people's conduct, perception, and ideas. Without values, no society can be regarded as morally and socially developed. Teaching standard values is a realistic solution for existing or potential problems in social and global scales (Mimar, 2014).

Dogan (2011) grouped standard values into national values (necessary for nation's unity and existence) and global values (shared by all societies, including knowledge, culture, competition, productivity, democracy, human rights, free market economy). Standard values do not emerge automatically but are taught mostly by teachers and parents.

Generic Skills Acquisition

Generic skills are non-technical skills needed by students aside from academic achievement to ensure they are outstanding and successful in various aspects including job placement (Selvadurai et al., 2012). These skills include critical thinking, problem-solving, communication, leadership, teamwork, moral values, continuous learning, numerical skills, time management, networking, and interpersonal relationship skills (Chinazor, 2021) and Enang, Gladstone, and Udoka, (2013). .

Generic skills are important job-related skills required for modern workers competencies that can be used across different occupations, providing platforms for young people and adults to obtain and sustain employment (Cranmer, 2016). Generic skills facilitate school leavers with knowledge and skills necessary for job employment and equip students with life-long skills when they are out of school, (Umoh, Ekpo, Effiong, and Asangausung, 2023).

Cooperation and Generic Skills Acquisition

Cooperation is a form of collective action that arouses student interest and motivates harder work for generic skills acquisition. Simone (2018) described cooperation as a form of interaction where individual students strive to achieve collective and common goals. Cooperative behaviour can be measured by engagement in collaborative learning activities like project work, practical, and presentations (Singh & Gera, 2015). During these activities, students not only learn subject content but also develop an array of generic skills.

Commitment and Generic Skills Acquisition

Commitment refers to a high level of attachment to organizational activities (Crosswell, 2008). Student commitment involves willingness to give utmost loyalty, time, and energy to practical and theoretical aspects of school subjects for effective generic skills attainment. Commitment is measured by students' punctuality and activeness in carrying out given activities.

Passion and Generic Skills Acquisition

Passion means strong desire and feeling towards something. A passionate learner has strong, powerful, compelling feelings and desire to acquire knowledge and skills through active engagement in classroom activities (Hamdi, 2017). Carbonneau et al. (2008) described passion as showing strong tendency and willingness through spending time and energy on activities someone likes or believes are important.

Obedience and Generic Skills Acquisition

Obedience involves compliance with set rules and regulations. Students' obedience or conformity to school rules and regulations refers to actions and practices directed toward school and learning, including attendance and active participation in classes (Wang et al., 2011). Students are expected to comply with teacher directives during class interaction to gain requisite skills for individual and societal development.

Self-determination and Generic Skills Acquisition

Self-determination refers to volitional actions taken by people the capacity to choose and have those choices achieved (Deci& Ryan, 2000). Self-determined behaviour enables one to act as primary causal agent in one's life and maintain or improve quality of life. Students who are self-determined are self-initiated, self-directed, and make positive things happen in their lives.

Theoretical Framework

Schwartz Theory of Basic Values (1992)

Schwartz's theory of basic values posits that values characterize cultural groups, societies, and individuals, tracing change over time and explaining the motivational bases of attitudes and behaviour. Schwartz specified six main features of values: values are beliefs; values refer to desirable goals that motivate action; values transcend specific actions and situations; values serve as standards or criteria; values are ordered by importance relative to one another; the relative importance of multiple values guides action; and any attitude or behaviour typically has implications for more than one value.

This theory supports that standard values such as passion and self-determination could facilitate generic skills acquisition. Students with deep passion for entrepreneurship and productivity in the labour market respond dutifully to subjects connected with generic skills acquisition for future self-development.

Theory of Reasoned Action (Ajzen, 1975)

The Theory of Reasoned Action comprises three general constructs: Behavioural Intention (BI), Attitude (A), and Subjective Norm (SN). The theory suggests that a person's behavioural intention depends on attitude about the behaviour and subjective norms (BI = A + SN). This theory shows the relationship between commitment as a standard value and generic skills acquisition. Students' entrepreneurial intention represents effort provided to undertake entrepreneurial activity, motivated by standard values.

Gouveia Functional Theory of Values (1998)

Gouveia identified two functions of terminal values: values as guides to human actions and values as expressions of human needs. The second functional dimension associates with expression of needs such as economic needs, implying orientation towards practical goals and normative rules. This theory links obedience with acquisition of entrepreneurship skills students' obedience to teachers' directives facilitates acquisition of generic skills for purposeful and economically dependent life.

Empirical Literature

Udo, Willie and Udom (2025) examines the effects of insecurity on Secondary school attendance in Ukanafun Local Government Area, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. The study used a survey method in the analysis. Research objectives and questions were set to guide the study. Questionnaire known as Effect of Insecurity on School Attendance (EISA) was developed to collate data for the study. A random sampling technique was used to select 107 parents in 10 Secondary Schools that were affected by the activities of insurgency in the study area. Responses to the questionnaire were summarized using percentages to study student's attendance in schools before and during the insecurity. The Queer Ladder theory proposed by Daniel Bell 2010 was adopted. It was observed that the level of school attendance before the crisis in the study Area was high and low during and after the crises. The result also revealed gender imbalance. Male student's attendance during the crisis was higher than female student's attendance.

Furthermore, the result shows that parents who were willing to send their children back to the affected schools were 58 out of 107 and which was merely above 50% of the total population. Based on these findings, the study recommended among others that education administrators should help students overcome emotional distress gotten during the crises through sensitization programmes, town hall briefings, and visit to churches in the affected communities. It was further recommended that teachers should embrace methods that will reduce emotional anguish instigated by the insurgency. Finally, government should tackle youth restiveness by providing employment give Special incentives to engage aggressive youths in the affected communities.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The correlational research design was adopted for this study. This design enables researchers to find out the magnitude and direction of relationship between dependent and independent variables (Udoh& Joseph, 2005). This design was considered suitable because it enabled measurement of interrelationships between standard values and generic skills acquisition.

Area of the Study

The study was conducted in Akwa Ibom North-East Senatorial District, comprising nine Local Government Areas: Etinan, Ibesikpo Asutan, Ibiono Ibom, Itu, Nsit Atai, Nsit Ibom, Nsit Ubium, Uruan, and Uyo. The district has 89 secondary schools with total population of about 20,272 senior secondary

two (SS2) students. The rationale for selecting this area was observed cases of students leaving school without entrepreneurship knowledge and skills for self-employment.

Population of the Study

The population comprised all 20,272 Senior Secondary Two (SS2) students in the 89 public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom North-East Senatorial District (Department of Planning and Research Statistics: State Secondary Education Board, Uyo, 2021).

Sample and Sampling Technique

A sample size of 378 Senior Secondary Two (SS2) students was selected through multi-stage sampling procedure. The sample size was determined using Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sampling procedure, which states that for populations ranging from 20,000 to 30,000, a sample of 378 is representative.

Stage one involved systematic random sampling to select 4 Local Government Areas from nine. Stage two used balloting method to select 18 secondary schools. Stage three involved selecting 21 students from each sampled school using the same balloting method, giving 378 respondents.

Instrumentation

The researcher-developed instrument titled "Standard Values and Generic Skills Acquisition Questionnaire (SVGSAQ)" was used for data collection. Section A contained five items each on cooperation, commitment, passion, obedience, and self-determination. Section B contained twenty items measuring generic skills acquisition. The instrument used a four-point rating scale: Strongly Agree (4), Agree (3), Disagree (2), Strongly Disagree (1).

Validation of the Instrument

Three experts assessed the instrument for face validity: two from the Department of Psychological Foundations of Education (Measurement and Evaluation Unit) and one from the Department of Social Studies and Citizenship Education, University of Uyo. Out of 50 items presented, five were deleted completely; three were restructured, reducing items to 45.

Reliability of the Instrument

Cronbach Alpha reliability technique established instrument reliability. The instrument was administered to 40 SS2 students in a selected school not included in the study sample. Reliability coefficients were: cooperation (0.73), commitment (0.75), passion (0.81), obedience (0.84), and self-determination (0.86). Overall reliability index was 0.79 for independent variables and 0.82 for generic skills acquisition.

Method of Data Collection

The instrument was personally administered by the researcher with two research assistants briefed on modalities. Respondents received verbal instructions and clarifications where necessary. All copies were completed and retrieved through instant collection.

Method of Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) for answering research questions and testing hypotheses at .05 significance level with 376 degrees of freedom. The r-value determined magnitude of relationship, while comparison with critical value determined significance.

Ethical Issues

The research purpose and procedure were explained to participants to avoid suspicion. Personal information was treated with utmost confidentiality. Informed consent was obtained, and respondents

were free to participate or withdraw. Data collection caused no physical or psychological harm. No payments influenced outcomes. Plagiarism and copyright violations were avoided.

Results

Research Question 1: Cooperation and Generic Skills Acquisition

Table 1: Correlation analysis between cooperation and generic skills acquisition

Variables	N	∑x	∑y	∑x²	∑y²	∑xy	r-value	Remark
Cooperation (x)	378	5416		73948				
Generic Skills (y)	378		5549		74718	75237	0.82	Very High Positive Relationship

Table 1 shows a correlation value of 0.82, indicating a very high positive relationship between cooperation and generic skills acquisition. Students are prone to acquire generic skills if they cooperate and work harmoniously with fellow students and teachers.

Research Question 2: Commitment and Generic Skills Acquisition

Table 2: Correlation analysis between commitment and generic skills acquisition

Variables	N	∑x	∑y	∑x²	∑y²	∑xy	r-value	Remark
Commitment (x)	378	5426		74882				
Generic Skills (y)	378		5549		74718	73553	0.74	Very High Positive Relationship

Table 2 shows a correlation value of 0.74, indicating a very high positive relationship between commitment and generic skills acquisition. Students are likely to acquire generic skills if they show more commitment to studies, attend classes regularly, and participate in skills acquisition activities.

Research Question 3: Passion and Generic Skills Acquisition

Table 3: Correlation analysis between passion and generic skills acquisition

Variables	N	∑x	∑y	∑x²	∑y²	∑xy	r-value	Remark
Passion (x)	378	5349		75985				
Generic Skills (y)	378		5549		74718	73923	0.64	High Positive Relationship

Table 3 shows a correlation value of 0.64, indicating a high positive relationship between passion and generic skills acquisition. Students are likely to acquire generic skills relevant for gainful employment if they have deep passion for learning varied school subjects.

Research Question 4: Obedience and Generic Skills Acquisition

Table 4: Correlation analysis between obedience and generic skills acquisition

Variables	N	∑x	∑y	∑x²	∑y²	∑xy	r-value	Remark
Obedience (x)	378	5318		75339				
Generic Skills (y)	378		5549		747187	135530.61	High Positive Relationship	

Table 4 shows a correlation value of 0.61, indicating a high positive relationship between obedience and generic skills acquisition. Students are likely to acquire generic skills if they comply with teacher instructions during classroom learning.

Research Question 5: Self-determination and Generic Skills Acquisition

Table 5: Correlation analysis between self-determination and generic skills acquisition

Variables	N	∑x	∑y	∑x²	∑y²	∑xy	r-value	Remark
Self-determination (x)	378	5339		76218				
Generic Skills (y)	378		5549		74718	736906	0.79	Very High Positive Relationship

Table 5 shows a correlation value of 0.79, indicating a very high positive relationship between self-determination and generic skills acquisition. Students are likely to acquire generic skills if they are more devoted and determined to learn and take active part in academic tasks.

Hypothesis Testing

Table 6: PPMC analysis between cooperation and generic skills acquisition

Variables	N	∑x	∑y	∑x²	∑y²	∑xy	r-cal	r-crit	Decision
Cooperation (x)	378	5416		73948					
Generic Skills (y)	378		5549		74718	752375	0.82*	0.196	Significant

*Significant; df = 376; critical r = 0.196

The calculated r-value of 0.82 is greater than critical value of 0.196. The null hypothesis is rejected. There is a significant relationship between cooperation and generic skills acquisition.

Table 7: PPMC analysis between commitment and generic skills acquisition

Variables	N	∑x	∑y	∑x²	∑y²	∑xy	r-cal	r-crit	Decision
Commitment (x)	378	5426		74882					
Generic Skills (y)	378		5549		74718	73553	0.74*	0.196	Significant

*Significant; df = 376; critical r = 0.196

The calculated r-value of 0.74 is greater than critical value of 0.196. The null hypothesis is rejected. There is a significant relationship between commitment and generic skills acquisition.

Table 8: PPMC analysis between passion and generic skills acquisition

Variables	N	∑x	∑y	∑x²	∑y²	∑xy	r-cal	r-crit	Decision
Passion (x)	378	5349		75985					
Generic Skills (y)	378		5549		74718	739234	0.64*	0.196	Significant

*Significant; df = 376; critical r = 0.196

The calculated r-value of 0.64 is greater than critical value of 0.196. The null hypothesis is rejected. There is a significant relationship between passion and generic skills acquisition.

Table 9: PPMC analysis between obedience and generic skills acquisition

Variables	N	∑x	∑y	∑x²	∑y²	∑xy	r-cal	r-crit	Decision
Obedience (x)	378	5318		75339					
Generic Skills (y)	378		5549		74718	713553	0.61*	0.196	Significant

*Significant; df = 376; critical r = 0.196

The calculated r-value of 0.61 is greater than critical value of 0.196. The null hypothesis is rejected. There is a significant relationship between obedience and generic skills acquisition.

Table 10: PPMC analysis between self-determination and generic skills acquisition

Variables	N	∑x	∑y	∑x²	∑y²	∑xy	r-cal	r-crit	Decision
Self-determination (x)	378	5339		76218					
Generic Skills (y)	378		5549		74718	736906	0.79*	0.196	Significant

*Significant; df = 376; critical r = 0.196

The calculated r-value of 0.79 is greater than critical value of 0.196. The null hypothesis is rejected. There is a significant relationship between self-determination and generic skills acquisition.

Summary of Findings

i. There is a very high positive and significant relationship between cooperation and generic skills acquisition ($r = 0.82$, $p < 0.05$).

ii. There is a very high positive and significant relationship between commitment and generic skills acquisition ($r = 0.74$, $p < 0.05$).

iii. There is a high positive and significant relationship between passion and generic skills acquisition ($r = 0.64$, $p < 0.05$).

iv. There is a high positive and significant relationship between obedience and generic skills acquisition ($r = 0.61$, $p < 0.05$).

v. There is a very high positive and significant relationship between self-determination and generic skills acquisition ($r = 0.79$, $p < 0.05$).

Discussion of Findings

Cooperation and Generic Skills Acquisition

The finding of a very high positive and significant relationship between cooperation and generic skills acquisition aligns with Santiago et al. (2018), who revealed significant association between cooperative learning and students' possession of generic skills. Ismaila (2018) similarly found that students' cooperation with teachers significantly influences acquisition of science process skills. Uzoamaka et al. (2016) discovered that students' acquisition of generic skills is strongly related to their cooperative abilities and competence. Cooperation between students and teachers can be sustained if students are open-minded, display clear communication, and participate in both theoretical and practical aspects of learning activities.

Commitment and Generic Skills Acquisition

The very high positive and significant relationship between commitment and generic skills acquisition conforms to Usman et al, (2018), who revealed significant influence of commitment on learned computer skills. Idoko (2014) found that commitment to studies significantly influences students' acquisition of communication and problem-solving skills essential for grasping employment opportunities. Olokundun et al, (2014) revealed that students more committed to learning acquired necessary enterprise skills than others lacking commitment. Full sense of commitment to studies is associated with acquisition of generic skills essential for gainful employment.

Passion and Generic Skills Acquisition

The high positive and significant relationship between passion and generic skills acquisition aligns with Philippe et al. (2009), who found that passionate students are often more anxious towards acquiring generic skills than un-passionate students. Kwaya (2013) similarly found that passionate students are more likely to engage in learning activities facilitating generic skills possession. Students who wish to be functional and work excellently when employed must handle academic activities with passion to acquire generic skills built across varied subject domains.

Obedience and Generic Skills Acquisition

The high positive and significant relationship between obedience and generic skills acquisition supports Gbemisola and Adeola (2015), who found that greater numbers of students lack practical skills for job creation due to lack of obedience or compliance with instructors. Chinyere (2018) found that lack of obedience to instructors negatively impacts students' acquisition of generic or employability skills. Ango and Kyari (2018) as well as, Mboho and Effiong, (2024), found significant differences in students' attitude towards entrepreneurship education based on obedience to instructors. Students need to obey or comply with teacher directions by responding positively to class activities and academic demands.

Self-determination and Generic Skills Acquisition

The very high positive and significant relationship between self-determination and generic skills acquisition conforms to Jasmine and Dede (2015), who found that self-determination, was significantly related to students' acquisition of innovative skills. Pamela (2010) found that self-determination significantly influences students' engagement in skills-based subjects, and non-involvement contributes to lack of practical skills for self-development and employment. Students who feel competent and self-determined have internal drive towards acquisition of employability skills learned across various school subjects.

Conclusion

This study established that standard values have significant positive relationships with generic skills acquisition among senior secondary school students. Cooperation, commitment, passion, obedience, and self-determination are all significantly associated with students' ability to acquire the generic skills necessary for employability and self-reliance in the modern workforce.

Students' cooperation with teachers and classmates strongly associates with generic skills acquisition. Students can effectively acquire generic skills if they learn to work in teams, collaborate, and establish good relationships with teachers. Commitment to learning promotes acquisition of numeric skills, problem-solving skills, ICT skills, and interpersonal relationship skills. Students with deep passion achieve self-fulfillment and showing willingness to engage in employability skills activities is a function of obedience to teachers' instructions, listening attentively, maintaining punctuality, responding positively

to assignments, and facilitating generic skills acquisition. Self-determination enables students to put more energy into persevering with and completing tasks that make skills acquisition tenable.

Generic skills acquisition is the main instrument preparing individuals for an increasingly demanding world of work. Students need to cultivate standard values that make generic skills acquisition possible. To produce excellent and knowledgeable human capital, secondary school graduates seeking employment must be equipped with essential generic skills important for increasing productivity and competitiveness. Currently, employers complain that most graduates cannot acquire desired careers because they lack generic skills such as positive work ethics, communication skills, teamwork, decision-making capabilities, and leadership.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made:

i. **Cooperation:** Students should cooperate and work harmoniously with teachers and fellow students particularly during classroom instruction instead of working separately in competition, so they can acquire generic skills needed for gainful employment in the labour market.

ii. **Commitment:** Students should be more committed to studies by attending classes and participating in classroom learning activities to acquire generic skills found across various school subjects.

iii. **Passion:** Teachers should make their lessons interesting and motivational so learners can develop passion for them and learn requisite generic skills for self-employment.

iv. **Obedience:** Secondary school students should always act in accordance with teacher instructions in both theoretical and practical aspects of learning so they can effectively achieve smooth transition into the world of work.

v. **Self-determination:** Students should maintain great determination for academic success and devotedly work towards acquisition of basic generic skills for employment and self-reliance.

Suggestions for Further Studies

The following areas are suggested for further research:

1. Family influences on students' acquisition of generic skills for self-employment in Akwa Ibom State.

2. Socio-cultural variables and students' tendency to soft skills for gainful employment.

3. Personal characteristics and attitude to entrepreneurship education among secondary school students.

4. School variables and students' attitude to entrepreneurship education.

5. Replication of this study with an enlarged sample to ascertain general application of findings.

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