

Entrepreneurial Skills as Determinant Tool for Undergraduates' Employability in Southwest, Nigeria

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Abstract: *The study investigated entrepreneurial skills as determinant tool of employability among undergraduates in Southwest, Nigeria. The study used descriptive research of the survey design. The population of the study consisted 953 undergraduates (male and female) from selected public Universities in Southwest, Nigeria. The sample for this study consisted 301 students in 400 level in public Universities in Southwest, Nigeria. The sample were selected using multi-stage sampling procedure. The reliability of the instrument was ascertained through Cronbach alpha which yielded a coefficient of 0.78. The data collected were analysed using frequency counts, percentages, bar chart, means, standard deviation, linear regression analysis. All hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. The study found that Entrepreneurial skills were possessed by undergraduates in public universities in Southwest, Nigeria. The study further revealed that the level of Entrepreneurial skills possessed by undergraduates in public universities in Southwest, Nigeria was moderate. The finding affirmed that entrepreneurial skills variables significantly determined undergraduates' employability in Southwest, Nigeria. Based on findings, the study concluded that entrepreneurial skills were significant determinant tool for undergraduates' employability in Southwest, Nigeria. It was thereby recommended among others that curriculum planners should integrate other relevant contents into university courses that could determine the employability of undergraduates upon graduation since the level of entrepreneurial skills was moderate. Ministry of Commerce and Industry should educate, and create awareness on the need for undergraduates to embrace self-employment and self-sustaining upon graduation.*

Keywords: Entrepreneurial skills, Problem solving skill, Innovation skill, Undergraduates' employability

INTRODUCTION

In developing economies like Nigeria, the introduction of entrepreneurship courses by the Federal government in institutions is a right call and well timed. Learning to start and run a firm while taking full responsibility for its success is what we mean when we talk about entrepreneurship. Ubogu (2023) describes entrepreneurship as a self-motivated process of vision, transformation as well as creation. Entrepreneurship

is encouraged in Nigeria since it may lead to self-employment, which in turn can reduce poverty and unemployment. As a result, emerging economies like Nigeria where graduates unemployment and poverty is on the rise need entrepreneurial skills. Olaniyi, (2016) recognized skills as the practical activities that help people become self-reliant and employable. According to Lawal, Famiwole and Mohammed (2014) entrepreneurial skills is the capacity to create, run and successfully manage a company. Entrepreneurial skills encompass a broad set of competencies, including creativity, critical thinking, problem-solving, financial literacy, risk management, and leadership among others. Exposing undergraduates to these range of entrepreneurial skills might serve as key determinants of their employability in today evolving job market especially in Southwest, Nigeria.

However, unemployment is a problem in both established and emerging countries; Nigeria is no exception. One of the economic challenges faced by the Nigerian educational system is unemployment. In 2023, the unemployment rate reached 41 percent, and it rose to 43 percent in 2024, as reported by the National Bureau of Statistics (2023) and Anozia (2024). The Nigerian educational system appears to be plagued by unemployment, as the majority of its graduates, are perpetually seeking employment opportunities that do not exist. This is due to the fact that the system was designed to be general in nature, failing to address specific occupational requirements. The National Policy on Education of the Federal Government of Nigeria (2013) de-emphasized the liberal education system in favour of the utilitarian type of education in order to accommodate the needs of society. Only by fully investing in undergraduates' skill sets will Nigeria be able to guarantee undergraduates employment when they graduate and put these problems behind them.

Employability has been a constraint in developing economies such as Nigeria. Employability is defined by Osere (2017) as the marketability of an individual's combined skills and the ability to operate/function as the situation requires. Employability is described as the capacity of undergraduates to demonstrate the knowledge and skills they have acquired in order to secure, maintain, and create positions that will allow them to achieve success and satisfaction upon their graduation (Pitan, 2017). According to Nwannah, Uwannah, and Ojelabi (2018), employability is not a collection of skills, but rather the ability to effectively create and sustain employment opportunities for oneself or others. The aforementioned demonstrated that employability is not restricted to gainful employment in the labour market, but rather encompasses the individual's capacity to generate employment and become self-sufficient. However, a crucial component of economic development, self-sufficiency, and national progress is the accomplishment of employability among undergraduates after graduation via the aforementioned abilities. Despite a lot of research aimed at reducing unemployment among undergraduates' and the government's focus on skills, there has been little research on the factors included in this study, which is worrying. This research aims to investigate entrepreneurial skills as a determinant tool for undergraduates' employability in Southwest, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Globally, the issue of unemployment has become a growing concern. As a result of the government's inability to employ undergraduates upon their graduation, the unemployment rate in Nigeria particularly in Southwest appears to remain a significant challenge. The nation's development is impeded by the sluggish pace of economic growth, low industrialization, and limited investment by the private sector. Consequently, the economy is unable to accommodate new entrants into the Nigerian labour market on an annual basis. The unemployment rate has been increasing, with a report indicating that it reached 41% in 2023 and grew to 43% in 2024 (Anozia, 2024). Numerous factors have been identified as contributing to the circumstance

in which undergraduates may encounter difficulty in securing employment, whether as employees or employers, following their graduation. One of these appears to be the failure to utilize and demonstrate the entrepreneurial skills they have acquired to establish a venture that will result in the undergraduates becoming employers of labour after graduation. Also, many undergraduates graduate with academic qualifications but lack the practical skills and competencies required to secure employment or create sustainable businesses. Societal perceptions also play a role, as many young people in the region are conditioned to seek formal employment rather than explore entrepreneurship as a viable career path. It is presumed that the exposure of undergraduates to entrepreneurial skills will provide them with the skills necessary to enhance their employability potential, solve problems, develop social interaction, and identify viable opportunities for venture creation. In Southwest Nigeria, there is a significant void in comprehending the determinants that influence individual preparedness for self-reliance, despite the importance of employability. In the interim, there appears to be a scarcity of research on this topic. Therefore, the study seeks to investigate entrepreneurial skills as determinant tool for undergraduates' employability in Southwest, Nigeria.

Purpose of the Study

This study investigated entrepreneurial skills as determinant tool for undergraduates' employability in Southwest, Nigeria. Specifically, the study

1. examined the entrepreneurial skills possessed by undergraduates' after graduation;
2. determined the level of entrepreneurial skills possessed by undergraduates' after graduation;
3. ascertained whether possession of problem solving skill will determine undergraduates' employability after graduation; and
4. established whether innovation skill will determine undergraduates' employability after graduation.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide this study:

1. What are the entrepreneurial skills possessed by undergraduates' in Southwest, Nigeria?
2. What is the level of entrepreneurial skills possessed by undergraduates' in Southwest, Nigeria?

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were generated to guide this study and tested at 0.05 level of significance

1. Problem solving skill will not significantly determine undergraduates' employability.
2. Innovation skill will not significantly determine undergraduates' employability

Empirical Review

Dauda, Gambo, and Bala (2021) showed that male students have high level of problem solving skills than female students thinking abilities. The "Problem-solving skills required of business education students for job performance in organizations in a digital era" were the subjects of an empirical research by Agwazie

(2024). The survey found that students also rely highly on problem-solving skills for job performance in organizations. Wordu and Pepple (2019) conducted an empirical study on the topic manpower development and entrepreneurship skills acquisition of Business Education undergraduates on industrial training scheme of the state-owned institutions in Rivers State, Nigeria. Finding showed that human relation skills as highly and innovative skills as moderately acquired by business education undergraduates for entrepreneurial development in the area.

Alpaslan (2021) also looked at the relationship between innovation and entrepreneurship skills of individual who receive sports education. Two hundred and forty individuals, including 79 females and 161 males, enrolled in the school of physical education and sports at Istanbul Gelislm University and chosen using a purposive sample technique, voluntarily made up the research group. Analysis of variance (ANOVA), Pearson's product moment correlation, and a t-test were all used by the researcher. The results showed that innovative skills and entrepreneurship levels of the individuals varied according to different variables. Akinbode and Oyelude (2020) performed an empirical research on 21st-century skills and fresh graduates' employability in Nigeria. In order to examine the obtained data, descriptive and inferential statistics were used. Findings revealed that many recent Nigerian college graduates were deficient in 21st-century skills like innovation skill, which has kept them out of work for a long time.

Similarly, Olawoyin (2022) examined self-employment skills needed by Business Education students in Colleges of Education in Southwest Nigeria. Guided by two research questions and two null hypotheses, the study adopted a descriptive survey design. The population included 2,682 year III NCE Business Education students from Federal and State Colleges of Education in the region, with a sample of 348 students selected using proportionate sampling. A questionnaire was used for data collection, achieving a reliability coefficient of 0.77 through the Cronbach Alpha method. Data analysis involved mean, standard deviation, and summated score percentages for research questions, while t-tests tested hypotheses at a 0.05 significance level. The study revealed that skills are essential for self-employment and national development.

Dambo and Oluchi (2023) conducted an empirical study titled Business Education Skills and Employment Generation among Graduate Students in Rivers State Universities. The findings revealed that Business Education graduates possessed skills such as business management, personal entrepreneurial, technical, and computer appreciation skills essential for employment generation. Egbri and Ogunleye (2024) conducted a study titled Entrepreneurial Skills Possessed by Business Education Students for Sustainable Enterprise in Ekiti State. The research examined entrepreneurial skills among 168 final-year Business Education students in Ekiti State. Findings indicated that students possessed managerial, marketing, and ICT skills to a low extent but accounting skills to a high extent. Ogonnaya (2022) looked into the self-management and problem-solving skills required for effective job performance of Business Education graduates as perceived by business teachers. A total of three research questions and three null hypotheses were formulated for the inquiry. The most successful ways to educate students to manage themselves and solve problems were found to be when teachers provide a good example, when they work with students to create attainable goals, when they use a learners-centered approach, and when they guide students in problem-solving

Okoro (2024) performed an empirical research with the title Problem Solving Skills required of Business Education graduates by employers. It was revealed that problem solving skills were highly demand employers. Ravikumar, Puthukulam, and Sharma (2022) conducted an empirical research entitled "A Study on Accounting Students' Perceptions of Employability Skills" at the University of Technology and Applied Sciences (UTAS), Muscat. The research revealed that students, regardless of their gender or the year of their education, do not believe that Learning and Development skills are essential for employment. Learning and Development skills encompass the ability to adapt technology, communicate effectively, develop lifelong learning skills, and problem solving skills. The employability of graduates from private universities in Bangladesh was studied by Hossain, Mustafi, and Parvin (2023). An exploratory research on employers in Bangladesh was conducted for this paper. As anticipated, having these abilities not only makes them competent and valued, but also ensures that they will have sustainable career pathways. Research on women-owned businesses in Nigeria's Balogun market was carried out by Okonkwo, Ndururi, and Kihara (2022). The paper explored the relationship between innovative skills and financial performance of women owned enterprises. Findings showed that there is a strong significant relationship between innovative skills and financial performance of women owned enterprises

An investigation of the "entrepreneurial skills required by Business Education Graduating students in Universities for self-reliance" was carried out by Ingwe, Okute, and Okon (2023). The study's findings showed a correlation between self-reliance and a variety of abilities, including those linked to information and communication technology (ICT), innovation, leadership, and marketing. The authors of the paper titled "Business education and entrepreneurial skills: Evidence from Arab universities" were Badawi, Reyad, Khamis, Hamdam, and Alsartawi (2018). The inquiry was guided by a set of four hypotheses. The results suggested that business students view the four entrepreneurial abilities (risk-taking, critical thinking, problem-solving, and innovation skills) as the essential components of creating their own firm.

A research named "Entrepreneurship skills required for employability by business education graduates in Rivers state universities" was undertaken by Ogwunte, Aruchi, and Adiola in 2024. This study aimed to better understand how business education graduates from Rivers State University were able to increase their employability via the development of entrepreneurial abilities. Graduates of business education programs in Rivers State who have an entrepreneurial spirit are more likely to get employed, according to the findings. A large percentage of business school graduates in Rivers State agreed that innovative skills are require at high extent in getting a job, according to the results. Researchers in Rivers State also found that many college graduates with a business degree agreed to a high extent that critical thinking skill is crucial to finding a job. Nwaokokorom (2023) explored the topic of "Employability Skills Required of Business Education Students in Colleges of Education for Job Performance in Organisations in Rivers State." The researcher utilised a descriptive survey approach for the inquiry. The study questions were evaluated using the mean with standard deviation, and the t-test for the hypotheses was performed at a significance level of .05. The findings indicated that senior business organisation officials in Rivers State thought accounting, secretarial, computer, office communication, interpersonal, and problem-solving skills possessed by College of Education students were highly sought after.

METHODOLOGY

This investigation implemented descriptive research in the form of a survey. The study included 953 students' (male and female) from some selected public universities in Southwest, Nigeria. Records were obtained from the registry of the designated universities. The sample was selected using the multistage sampling. In order to determine the sample size scientifically, the Krejcie and Morgan method was used. Two hundred and seventy-four (274) was the corresponding sample sizes determined using the table. However, a 10% increase in the number of questionnaire copies was adopted to account for the probability of non-response (Zikmund, Babin, Carr and Griffin, 2013). The selected undergraduates (n=301) was each given a questionnaire to fill out in order to contribute to the researching process while three hundred was completed and returned. To ensure the dependability of the instruments, the Cronbach Alpha technique was used. In order to examine the obtained data, descriptive and inferential statistics were used. Descriptive statistics, such as percentages, means, bar chart and standard deviation, were used to answer the study questions. Linear regression was used to examine research hypotheses.

RESULTS

Table 1: Entrepreneurial skills possessed by undergraduates' in Southwest, Nigeria

ENTREPRENEURIAL SKILLS	SA	A	D	SD	MEAN
Problem-solving skill	215 (71.7)	73 (24.3)	9 (3.1)	4 (1.2)	3.67
Innovation skill	226 (75.2)	59 (19.7)	12 (4.1)	3 (0.9)	3.69

The entrepreneurial skills of undergraduates' in Southwest Nigeria are illustrated in Table 1. The mean scores of all items exceeded the cut-off point of 2.50 for the rating scale. This suggests that undergraduates' in Southwest Nigeria possessed entrepreneurial skills, including problem-solving and innovation skills.

Table 2: Level of entrepreneurial skills possessed by undergraduates in Southwest Nigeria

Level of Entrepreneurial Skills	\bar{X}	SD	Frequency	Percentage
Low (20.00-58.99)	63.39	4.40	24	8.0
Moderate (59.00-67.78)			236	78.7
High (67.79-80.00)			40	13.3
Total			300	100.0

The level of entrepreneurial skills that undergraduates' in Southwest Nigeria possessed is illustrated in Table 2. The results indicated that 24 respondents representing 8% of the 300 sampled, possessed a low

level of entrepreneurial skills. 236 respondents representing 78.7 percent, possessed moderate entrepreneurial skills, while 40 respondents, representing 13.3 percent, possessed high entrepreneurial skills. This indicated that the entrepreneurial skills of undergraduates' in Southwest Nigeria was moderate.

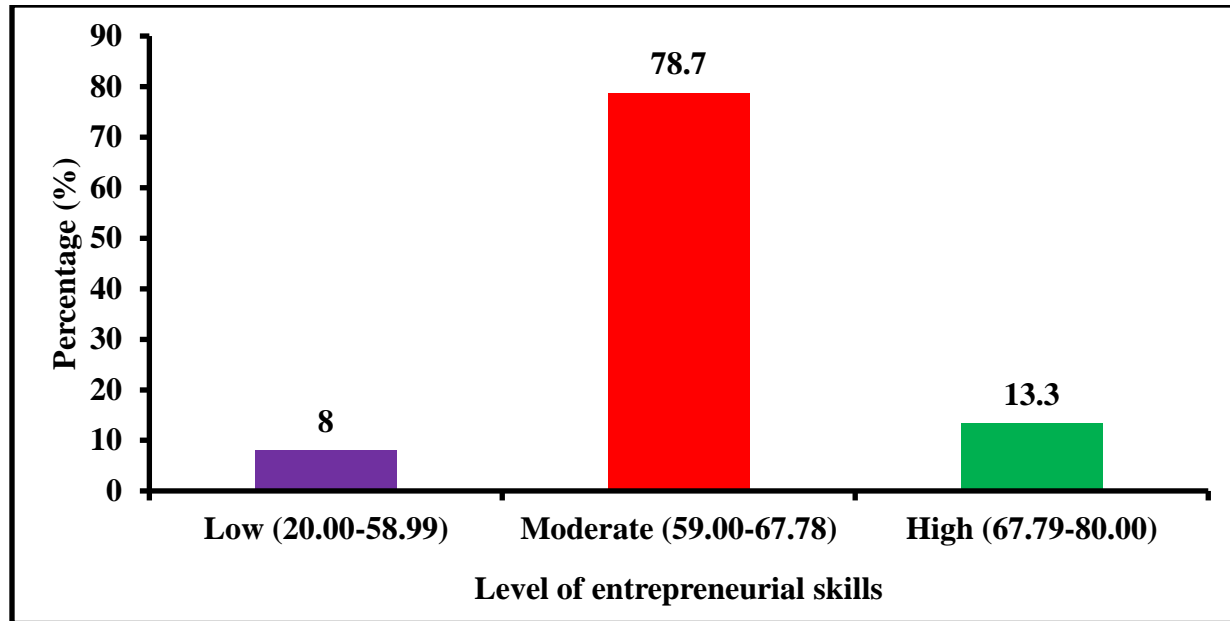


Figure 1: Level of entrepreneurial skills possessed by undergraduates in Southwest Nigeria

Hypothesis 1: Problem-solving skill will not significantly determine undergraduates' employability.

Table 3: Linear Regression showing Problem-solving skill as Determinant of undergraduates' employability

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta (β)		
(Constant)	26.759	1.347		19.865	.000
Problem-solving skill	.371	.043	.449	8.664	.000

Multiple R= 0.449, Multiple R²= 0.201, Adjusted R²= 0.199, F_{1,298}= 75.069

*p<0.05

The following regression can be derived from Table 4.

$$Y = a + bX$$

Where

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Y	=	undergraduates' employability
X	=	Problem-solving skill
b	=	Regression Weight Coefficients
a	=	Constant (other variables other than X)

The relationship between the dependent and independent variables can therefore be given as follow:

$$Y = 26.759 + 0.371X$$

According to Table 3, the employability of undergraduates was strongly impacted by their problem-solving skill ($F_{1,298} = 75.069$, $p < 0.05$). The null hypothesis is rejected. The employability of students is positively correlated with the predictor variable (problem-solving skill) according to the table ($R = 0.449$, $p < 0.05$). The predictor variable is a factor that may impact the employability of undergraduates. According to the coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.201$), the predictor variable explained 20.1% ($R^2 \times 100$) of the total variation in the employability of students. The remaining 79.9% of the unexplained variation is mostly attributable to other variables that were not considered in the study but could have an effect on employability. At the 0.05 level of significance, the computed F-ratio (75.069) was significant. This implies that the predictor variable jointly provides a significant explanation for the variation in the undergraduates' employability.

Hypothesis 2: Innovative skill will not significantly determine undergraduates' employability.

Table 4 Linear Regression showing innovative skill as Determinant of undergraduates' employability

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta (β)		
(Constant)	23.623	1.365		17.302	.000
Innovation skill	.445	.041	.535	10.919	.000
Multiple R = 0.535, Multiple $R^2 = 0.286$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.283$, $F_{1,298} = 119.225$					

* $p < 0.05$

The following regression can be derived from Table 12.

$$Y = a + bX$$

Where

Y	=	Undergraduates' employability
X	=	Innovation skill

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b = Regression Weight Coefficients

a = Constant (other variables other than X)

The relationship between the dependent and independent variables can therefore be given as follow:

$$Y = 23.623 + 0.445X$$

Table 12 shows that innovative skill significantly determine undergraduates' employability ($F_{1,298} = 119.225$, $p < 0.05$). The null hypothesis is rejected. The table shows that there is significant positive multiple correlation between the predictor variable (innovative skill) and undergraduates' employability ($R = 0.535$, $p < 0.05$). This implies that the predictor variable is a factor that can exert influence on undergraduates' employability.

The predictor variable explained 28.6% ($R^2 \times 100$) of the total variance of undergraduates' employability, according to the value of the coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.286$). The remaining 71.4% of the unexplained variation is mostly attributable to other variables that were not included in the study but could account for undergraduates' employability. At the 0.05 level of significance, the computed F-ratio (119.225) was significant. This implies that the predictor variable jointly provides a significant explanation for the variation in the undergraduates' employability.

DISCUSSION

The research demonstrated that undergraduates in Southwest, Nigeria possessed entrepreneurial skills, including problem-solving skill and innovation skill. These results suggest that undergraduates had the requisite skills to become entrepreneurs upon graduation, rather than pursuing white-collar jobs or paid employment. This discovery supports the submission of Badawi, et al (2018), which demonstrated that undergraduates' regarded entrepreneurial skills, including innovation, problem-solving, as essential components of establishing a venture. This finding is in direct opposition to the submissions of Dambo and Oluchi (2023) which indicated that Graduates possessed entrepreneurial skills, including business management, personal entrepreneurial, technical, and computer appreciation, as well as creative and technology skills, to generate employment and be self-sufficient in a recession.

The research demonstrated that the entrepreneurial skills of undergraduates in public universities in Southwest, Nigeria were moderate. This is consistent with Olawoyin's (2022) observation that a variety of talents are required for both national development and self-employment. In contrast, Akinbode et al (2020) refute these findings, contending that Nigerian fresh graduates were lacking in 21st-century skills. Additionally, Egbri and Ogunleye (2024) demonstrated that students possessed entrepreneurial skills to a diminished degree. The results of this study indicated that, although the level of entrepreneurial skills is commendable, there is a need for development, particularly in the area of promoting self-employment among graduates in order to mitigate the risk of unemployment.

The research identified a substantial determinant of the employability of undergraduates in Southwest Nigeria and problem solving skill. The null hypothesis's rejection suggests that the employability of University undergraduates in the study area is significantly influenced by their problem-solving abilities upon graduation. Ogbonnaya (2022) and Dauda et al (2021) confirmed a substantial correlation between employability and problem-solving abilities, which is consistent with the results. Additionally, Agwazie

(2024), Nwakokorom (2023), and Okoro (2024) demonstrated that a high level of problem-solving skill was essential for the advancement of entrepreneurial development and job performance among students. They concluded that the skill of problem solving is essential for entrepreneurial development and that setting achievable objectives with students and assisting them in resolving problems are effective strategies for employability. Additionally, their problem-solving abilities were enhanced upon the conclusion of industrial training. Nevertheless, the results are in direct opposition to Ravikumar et al's (2022) assertion that employability is not contingent upon the possession of problem-solving abilities. These results suggest that lecturers should establish achievable objectives for students and that students should participate in industrial training to foster entrepreneurial development.

The study's results also indicated that the employability of undergraduates is significantly influenced by their innovation skill. The repercussions of this discovery are that innovation skill is required to enhance the value of extant enterprises and guarantee their long-term employability. This discovery may be attributed to the fact that undergraduates who possess an adequate level of innovation skills are more likely to be employable upon their graduation. Hossain et al (2023) demonstrated that the skill guarantee graduates sustainable career trajectories, as anticipated. Ingwe et al (2023) confirmed that self-reliance was substantially improved by innovation abilities. Okonkwo et al (2022) and Ogwunte et al (2024) demonstrated a strong correlation between the employability of graduates and the performance of enterprises. In contrast, Akinbode et al (2020) observed that the innovation skill of recent graduates were inadequate, which resulted in their unemployment over the years. Wordu and Pepple (2019) also discovered that business education undergraduates moderately acquired innovation skill for entrepreneurial development.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, it was concluded that entrepreneurial Skills were possessed by undergraduate' in public universities in the Southwest, Nigeria and that these skills have significant determinants on undergraduates' employability in Southwest, Nigeria. The subsequent recommendations were issued in accordance with the results of this investigation:

1. Educational authorities should promote the implementation, teaching, and inculcation of the necessary skills in undergraduates, as they significantly contribute to employability through entrepreneurial skills.
2. In order to facilitate the progression of the skills of undergraduates, lecturers should increase the intensity of the tasks they are assigned.
3. Undergraduates' should be aware of the important role that these diverse skills play in the success of entrepreneurship and should strive to cultivate them in order to increase their self-reliance.

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