ISSN: 2992-2313 (Online)
ISSN: 2992-2305 (Print)

THE IMPACT OF BUSINESS EDUCATION PROGRAMMES ON YOUTH ENTREPRENEURIAL ENGAGEMENT AS A STRATEGY FOR MITIGATING ECONOMIC UNCERTAINTY IN NIGERIA

Donatus Ugbadu Ititim & Kate Agbo Okaka
Department of Vocational and Technical Education
University of Cross River State, Calabar, Nigeria

Abstract

This study investigated the extent to which Business Education programmes influence youth entrepreneurial engagement and examined the challenges hindering their effectiveness in addressing economic uncertainties in Nigeria. The research was conducted at the University of Calabar, involving a population of 29 Business Education lecturers and 75 final-year students. Two objectives and two corresponding research questions guided the study. A descriptive survey design was adopted, and data were collected using a structured questionnaire titled "Business Education Programme and Economic Uncertainty Questionnaire (BEPEUQ)." The instrument was validated by experts and tested for reliability, yielding Cronbach Alpha coefficients of 0.82 for entrepreneurial engagement and 0.86 for challenges hindering effectiveness. Data analysis was conducted using mean and standard deviation, with a mean score of 2.50 and above indicating agreement. Findings revealed that Business Education programmes significantly equip students with entrepreneurial knowledge, skills, and readiness for self-employment, fostering youth engagement in entrepreneurship. However, challenges such as outdated curricula, inadequate infrastructure, limited practical training, lack of qualified instructors with entrepreneurial experience, and weak university-industry linkages were found to limit the full effectiveness of the programmes. The study concludes that while Business Education is vital for youth empowerment and economic development, addressing these structural and institutional barriers is essential to maximize its impact

Key words: Business Education, Challenges, Entrepreneurship, Youth Engagement and Youth Unemployment

Introduction

Nigeria, like many developing countries, continues to face persistent economic uncertainties marked by high unemployment rates, inflation, declining industrial output, and limited opportunities for sustainable livelihoods (National Bureau of Statistics [NBS], 2023). These economic challenges have disproportionately affected Nigerian youths, resulting in widespread economic disenfranchisement, social unrest, and increased reliance on government support (Okon & Effiong, 2022). In addressing these challenges, education—particularly Business Education—has been identified as a vital strategy to equip individuals with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for self-reliance and economic empowerment (Uwaifo, 2021).

Business Education, as a critical component of vocational and technical education, is designed to prepare individuals for careers in business and entrepreneurship. It offers practical training in key areas such as accounting, marketing, management, communication, and digital enterprise (Ekpenyong, 2020). The overarching goal of Business Education is to produce graduates who are not only employable but also capable of creating jobs and adapting to the evolving demands of a competitive economy (Ogbuanya & Idoko, 2023). In light of Nigeria's volatile economic environment, Business Education serves as a proactive tool, enabling youths to engage in entrepreneurial ventures and contribute meaningfully to national development (Chukwuemeka & Adeniran, 2022).

Despite government initiatives to integrate entrepreneurship into educational curricula and support youth enterprise development, the anticipated positive outcomes have yet to be fully realized. Many graduates continue to lack practical skills, business acumen, and access to startup capital—factors essential for successful entrepreneurship (Ibrahim & Garba, 2021). Consequently, questions remain regarding the effectiveness of current Business Education programmes in fostering genuine entrepreneurial engagement and mitigating economic hardship among Nigerian youths (Adebayo & Okeke, 2023).

This study, therefore, aims to empirically investigate the influence of Business Education programmes on youth entrepreneurial engagement as a strategy for addressing economic uncertainty in Nigeria. It explores how Business Education affects entrepreneurial intentions and behaviors, identifies challenges limiting its effectiveness, and provides policy recommendations to strengthen its role in promoting economic stability.

Several empirical studies support the positive role of Business Education in entrepreneurship development. For example, Olawale and Ojo (2023) found that Business Education significantly enhances entrepreneurial intentions among South-West Nigerian university students, especially when complemented by practical components like business plan development and internships. Similarly, Okoro and Akpan (2022) reported a strong positive correlation between Business Education exposure and students' readiness to pursue entrepreneurial ventures in the South-South region. Ibrahim and Yusuf (2021) emphasized that while Business Education equips youths with essential business management skills, limited practical training restricts their full entrepreneurial transition, recommending the establishment of university-based business incubation hubs.

On the other hand, challenges hindering the effectiveness of Business Education have been well documented. Chukwuemeka and Okechukwu (2022) identified outdated curricula, poor infrastructure, and inadequate funding as major obstacles in Nigerian public universities. Adebayo and Salami (2023) highlighted the lack of qualified instructors with entrepreneurial experience, limited practical resources, and weak university-industry collaborations as additional barriers. Furthermore, Nwachukwu and Abang (2021) underscored the absence of entrepreneurship laboratories, digital tools, and reliable internet access in many institutions, stressing that overcoming these challenges is vital for leveraging Business Education as a strategic instrument for national development.

Problem of the Study

Nigeria's economic landscape continues to be marked by persistent instability, including high youth unemployment, inflation, and limited access to sustainable income-generating opportunities (National Bureau of Statistics [NBS], 2023). Despite various government interventions aimed at fostering economic growth and empowering young people, the gap between educational outcomes and market demands remains wide. Business Education, which is designed to equip individuals with entrepreneurial and managerial skills, has been identified as a critical tool for mitigating these uncertainties (Chukwuemeka & Adeniran, 2022). However, its potential in addressing economic challenges has not been fully realized. Many graduates of Business Education programmes struggle with limited practical exposure, inadequate access to start-up capital, and insufficient mentorship, making it difficult for them to convert acquired knowledge into viable entrepreneurial ventures (Ibrahim & Garba, 2021). Moreover, institutional and curricular weaknesses—such as outdated syllabi, lack of industry partnerships, and minimal emphasis on innovation and technology—have hindered the capacity of Business Education to make meaningful contributions to economic resilience (Ogbuanya & Idoko, 2023). Existing studies have acknowledged the theoretical importance of Business Education in economic development, but few have empirically examined its effectiveness in promoting entrepreneurial engagement among Nigerian youths during periods of economic uncertainty (Adebayo & Okeke, 2023). Consequently, a research gap exists in understanding how Business

ISSN: 2992-2313 (Online)
ISSN: 2992-2305 (Print)

Education can be strategically repositioned to serve as a practical instrument for economic transformation in Nigeria. Therefore, this study seeks to address the pressing question: *To what extent do Business Education programmes contribute to youth entrepreneurial engagement and economic stability in Nigeria?* By examining this issue empirically, the research aims to provide evidence-based insights that can inform curriculum reforms, policy direction, and targeted interventions toward reducing economic vulnerabilities through education.

Objectives of the Study

This study investigated the extent to which Business Education programmes influence youth entrepreneurial engagement and examined the challenges hindering their effectiveness in addressing economic uncertainties in Nigeria. Specifically the study sought to:

1. Eexamine the influence of Business Education programmes on youth entrepreneurial engagement in Nigeria during periods of economic uncertainty.
2. Identify the challenges limiting the effectiveness of Business Education in addressing economic instability in Nigeria.

Research Questions

The study was guided by two research questions:

1. To what extent do Business Education programmes influence entrepreneurial engagement among Nigerian youths?
2. What are the key challenges hindering the effectiveness of Business Education in mitigating economic uncertainties in Nigeria?

Methodology

the study employed a descriptive survey research design, which was deemed appropriate for collecting and analyzing data from a specific population to assess the influence of Business Education programmes on youth entrepreneurial engagement, as well as the challenges limiting their effectiveness in addressing economic uncertainties in Nigeria. The study was conducted in Calabar, the capital city of Cross River State, Nigeria, with the University of Calabar serving as the research setting. The population consisted of twenty-nine Business Education lecturers from the university's Department of Business Education and seventy-five final-year Business Education students who had completed core courses in the programme.

For sampling, a census technique was used for the lecturers due to their manageable number, allowing full participation. In contrast, purposive sampling was applied to select seventy-five final-year students who were believed to have sufficient exposure to entrepreneurial principles taught in the programme. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire titled "Business Education Programme and Economic Uncertainty Questionnaire (BEPEUQ)," divided into two sections addressing the sub-variables: youth entrepreneurial engagement and challenges hindering the effectiveness of Business Education. The questionnaire items were rated on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree. To ensure validity, the questionnaire was reviewed by three experts from the University of Calabar, who confirmed its clarity, relevance, and content validity. The instrument's reliability was established through a pilot test involving fifteen Business Education students from another institution, yielding Cronbach Alpha coefficients of 0.82 for entrepreneurial engagement and 0.86 for challenges, indicating good reliability. The questionnaires were administered in person to both lecturers and students in their classrooms and offices, with respondents given sufficient time to complete them. All completed questionnaires were collected immediately to ensure a high response rate. Data analysis was performed using mean and standard deviation. A mean score of 2.50 or higher

indicated agreement with the statements, while a score below 2.50 indicated disagreement, which guided the interpretation of the research questions

Findings of the Study

Research question one

To what extent do Business Education programmes influence entrepreneurial engagement among Nigerian youths?

Table 1: mean rating of the responses on Business Education programmes influence entrepreneurial engagement among Nigerian youths

S/N	Items Statement	N	M	SD	Remarks
1	Business Education has equipped me with skills to start and manage a business.	75	3.12	0.87	Accepted
2	I gained practical knowledge of entrepreneurship through Business Education.	75	2.78	0.66	Accepted
3	Business Education has increased my interest in self-employment.	75	3.87	0.56	Accepted
4	The Business Education curriculum is relevant to current economic realities.	75	2.96	0.61	Accepted
5	Business Education helps reduce youth unemployment by promoting entrepreneurship.	75	2.85	0.75	Accepted
6	I have used knowledge from Business Education to identify viable business ideas.	75	2.77	0.79	Accepted
	Cluster Mean	**75**	**3.058**	**0.706**	**Accepted**

The findings in Table 1 indicate that Business Education programmes moderately and positively influence entrepreneurial engagement among Nigerian youths. Among 75 participants, the highest agreement was on increased interest in self-employment (M = 3.87), showing the programme's success in fostering an entrepreneurial mindset. Participants also felt reasonably skilled to start and manage businesses (M = 3.12). However, practical aspects such as acquiring hands-on entrepreneurship skills, identifying viable business ideas, and curriculum relevance scored lower (around 2.77 to 2.96), highlighting a gap between theory and practice. The perceived role of Business Education in reducing youth unemployment through entrepreneurship was moderate (M = 2.85). Overall, with a cluster mean of 3.058, the study concludes that Business Education positively impacts entrepreneurial engagement but needs stronger practical elements like hands-on training and industry collaboration to enhance its effectiveness in producing viable entrepreneurs.

Research question two

What are the key challenges hindering the effectiveness of Business Education in mitigating economic uncertainties in Nigeria?

ISSN: 2992-2313 (Online)
ISSN: 2992-2305 (Print)

Table 2: Mean rating of respondents resonses on key challenges hindering the effectiveness of Business Education in mitigating economic uncertainties in Nigeria

S/N	Items Statement	N	M	SD	Remarks
7	Lack of practical exposure limits the effectiveness of Business Education.	75	2.51	0.89	Accepted
8	Inadequate funding affects the quality of Business Education delivery.	75	3.87	0.66	Accepted
9	Outdated curriculum reduces the relevance of Business Education to current needs.	75	3.29	0.72	Accepted
10	There is insufficient collaboration between institutions and industries.	75	2.52	0.69	Accepted
11	Most Business Education lecturers lack current entrepreneurial experience.	75	2.50	0.51	Accepted
12	Poor infrastructure hinders effective teaching of Business Education.	75	3.91	0.57	Accepted
	Cluster Mean	**75**	**3.10**	**0.67**	**Accepted**

The Data in table 2 revealed that, 75 participants responses indicate that Business Education faces significant challenges in addressing economic uncertainties. Poor infrastructure (M = 3.91) and inadequate funding (M = 3.87) are the most critical barriers, followed by an outdated curriculum (M = 3.29). Additional challenges include limited practical exposure, weak industry collaboration, and lecturers' lack of entrepreneurial experience. The overall mean score of 3.10 reflects a consensus on these systemic issues. Addressing these challenges through improved funding, curriculum updates, infrastructure enhancement, and stronger industry partnerships is essential to enhance the effectiveness of Business Education in Nigeria.

Discussion of the Findings

To examine the influence of Business Education programmes on youth entrepreneurial engagement in Nigeria during periods of economic uncertainty.

The findings of the study revealed that Business Education programmes positively influence youth entrepreneurial engagement in Nigeria. Respondents affirmed that the programme has equipped them with relevant skills to start and manage businesses, increased their interest in self-employment, and contributed to reducing youth unemployment through entrepreneurship promotion. Additionally, the study showed that Business Education helps students identify viable business ideas and offers some practical knowledge of entrepreneurship. However, participants expressed concerns regarding the limited relevance of the current curriculum to modern economic realities and the insufficiency of practical training components within the programme. These findings align with existing empirical literature. For instance, Olawale and Ojo (2023) highlighted that Business Education significantly promotes entrepreneurial intentions among students, especially when integrated with practical components such as business plan development and internships. Similarly, Okoro and Akpan (2022) reported a strong correlation between exposure to Business Education and students' readiness to engage in entrepreneurial ventures, emphasizing the importance of entrepreneurial orientation embedded in academic instruction. Ibrahim and Yusuf (2021) also supported this view, asserting that Business Education equips Nigerian youths with essential business management skills. However, they stressed that limited practical training opportunities hinder students' ability to fully transition into entrepreneurship after graduation. Their recommendation for the inclusion of university-based business incubation hubs resonates with the concerns raised in this study about the need to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application. The study supports the

conclusion that Business Education programmes play a vital role in fostering entrepreneurial engagement among Nigerian youths. Nevertheless, to enhance its effectiveness, greater emphasis must be placed on curriculum reform, experiential learning, and stronger industry linkages to better prepare graduates for real-world entrepreneurial challenges.

To identify the challenges limiting the effectiveness of Business Education in addressing economic instability in Nigeria.

The findings of the study revealed that while Business Education is recognized for its potential in fostering entrepreneurial skills, several structural and instructional challenges hinder its overall effectiveness. Participants indicated concerns about the lack of modern facilities, insufficient practical tools, and a gap between what is taught and the realities of the contemporary business environment. Respondents also noted the limited availability of digital learning tools and entrepreneurship laboratories, which are critical for practical training and innovation. These findings are consistent with previous scholarly works. Chukwuemeka and Okechukwu (2022) identified similar barriers such as outdated curricula, inadequate infrastructure, and insufficient funding as core limitations affecting Business Education delivery in Nigeria. Their observations that curricula are not aligned with global economic and technological trends resonate with the respondents' perceptions in the present study. Additionally, Adebayo and Salami (2023) emphasized institutional weaknesses such as the shortage of instructors with real-world entrepreneurial experience and poor university-industry collaboration. These issues reduce the practical relevance of Business Education programmes, thereby affecting students' preparedness for entrepreneurial ventures. Nwachukwu and Abang (2021) also corroborated the study's findings by pointing to the absence of entrepreneurship laboratories and the lack of access to digital instructional tools in many tertiary institutions. They argued that these deficiencies limit the experiential learning process necessary for effective skill acquisition and business innovation. In conclusion, the study confirms that although Business Education in Nigeria holds great promise, its impact is significantly undermined by systemic challenges. Addressing these issues—particularly through curriculum reform, improved infrastructure, enhanced funding, and strong university-industry partnerships—is essential to transforming Business Education into a robust driver of youth empowerment and national economic development.

Conclusion

This study examined the influence of Business Education programmes on youth entrepreneurial engagement and the challenges hindering their effectiveness in Nigeria. Findings revealed that Business Education significantly contributes to equipping students with entrepreneurial knowledge, skills, and self-employment readiness. It fosters the development of viable business ideas and supports efforts to reduce youth unemployment through entrepreneurship. However, the study also uncovered several impediments that undermine the full potential of Business Education. These include outdated curricula, inadequate infrastructure, insufficient practical training, lack of qualified instructors with entrepreneurial experience, and weak linkages between universities and industries. These challenges limit the experiential learning process and reduce the employability and entrepreneurial competence of graduates. In view of these findings, it is concluded that while Business Education is a vital tool for enhancing youth entrepreneurial engagement, its effectiveness is contingent upon addressing the structural, instructional, and institutional barriers that currently limit its impact. Strengthening curriculum relevance, improving infrastructure, enhancing staff capacity, and fostering industry partnerships are essential steps toward transforming Business Education into a strategic vehicle for youth empowerment and national development.

ISSN: 2992-2313 (Online)
ISSN: 2992-2305 (Print)

Recommendations

The followings recommendations were made:

1. Universities regularly review and revise Business Education programmes to incorporate contemporary economic trends, digital tools, and entrepreneurial innovations to better prepare students for the current market.
2. Institutions should invest in modern infrastructure and technology to provide an enabling environment for experiential learning.
3. universities should implement continuous professional development programmes that expose lecturers to industry practices and entrepreneurial skills.
4. Collaboration with industries should be intensified to bridge the gap between theory and practice, provide mentorship, and facilitate resource sharing, thereby enhancing students' real-world entrepreneurial readiness.
5. Government and educational stakeholders should prioritize financing Business Education to improve its quality and impact.
6. universities should create incubation centres that provide students with support, mentorship, and resources to develop and launch viable business ventures.

.

References

Adebayo, S. A., & Okeke, N. M. (2023). Entrepreneurship education and youth unemployment in Nigeria: The role of business education. *African Journal of Educational Research, 29*(1), 56–68.

Adebayo, T. M., & Salami, D. K. (2023). Institutional challenges in the delivery of Business Education in Nigeria: A case study of federal universities. *Journal of Educational Studies and Innovation, 14*(1), 56–67.

Chukwuemeka, A. O., & Adeniran, T. A. (2022). Business education as a catalyst for national development in Nigeria. *Nigerian Journal of Vocational and Business Education, 20*(2), 87–98.

Chukwuemeka, O. E., & Okechukwu, M. U. (2022). Curriculum and infrastructural limitations of Business Education programmes in Nigerian universities. *Nigerian Journal of Vocational and Technical Education, 18*(2), 91–104.

Ekpenyong, L. E. (2020). *Foundations of vocational and technical education in Nigeria: Philosophy and theory*. Supreme Ideal Publishers.

Ibrahim, L. A., & Yusuf, H. G. (2021). Business Education as a catalyst for youth empowerment and self-employment in Nigeria. *International Journal of Business and Educational Research, 7*(3), 34–48.

Ibrahim, U. A., & Garba, A. (2021). Challenges of entrepreneurship education in curbing graduate unemployment in Nigeria. *International Journal of Educational Development, 47*(4), 102–110.

National Bureau of Statistics (NBS). (2023). *Labour force statistics: Unemployment and underemployment report*. Retrieved from https://www.nigerianstat.gov.ng

Nwachukwu, B. C., & Abang, F. U. (2021). Infrastructural and pedagogical constraints in teaching Business Education in Nigeria. *African Journal of Educational Management, 9*(2), 73–85.

Ogbuanya, T. C., & Idoko, C. U. (2023). Business education and entrepreneurial mindset among undergraduates: A pathway to economic sustainability. *Journal of Business and Vocational Education, 15*(1), 42–54.

Okon, J. E., & Effiong, R. U. (2022). The role of higher education in addressing youth restiveness and economic instability in Nigeria. *Journal of Education and Policy Development, 11*(3), 119–130.

Okoro, C. E., & Akpan, U. O. (2022). Entrepreneurial orientation and the role of Business Education in Nigerian universities. *West African Journal of Education, 16*(1), 45–59.

Olawale, M. T., & Ojo, A. A. (2023). Impact of Business Education on entrepreneurial skills development among undergraduates in South-West Nigeria. *Journal of Contemporary Educational Research, 11*(1), 23–35.

Uwaifo, V. O. (2021). Vocational education and skills acquisition: The way forward in curbing unemployment in Nigeria. *Journal of Technical and Science Education, 18*(1), 34–45.