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# INNOVATIVE STRATEGIES FOR SURVIVING ECONOMIC UNCERTAINTY AMONG LECTURERS OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

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**Abstract**

*The study examined innovative strategies for surviving economic uncertainty among lecturers in vocational education in Nigeria. A survey research design was adopted to guide the investigation. Specifically, two objectives, along with corresponding research questions and two hypotheses, were formulated to direct the study. The population comprised 82 vocational education lecturers, who were studied in total without sampling. Data were collected using a 14-item structured questionnaire titled Innovative Strategies for Surviving Economic Uncertainty among Lecturers of Vocational Education (ISSEULVE). The face and content validity of the instrument were established through expert judgment involving two specialists in business education and one expert in measurement and evaluation. To ensure reliability, a pilot test was conducted, and the internal consistency of the instrument was calculated using the Cronbach Alpha formula. The reliability coefficients obtained were .89 and .94 for Clusters B1 and B2, respectively, with an overall reliability index of .96. The researcher, with the assistance of three adequately briefed research assistants, administered the instrument. Of the 82 questionnaires distributed, 71 were correctly completed and returned, and these were used for data analysis. Descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) were employed to answer the research questions, while an independent t-test was used to test the null hypotheses at the 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed that lecturers in Nigerian universities, particularly those in vocational and business education, are increasingly adopting innovative strategies to navigate economic hardship and institutional resource constraints. These strategies include entrepreneurial ventures, prudent financial planning, extracurricular income-generating activities, the use of ICT tools, simulation-based instruction, and collaboration with external organizations. Collectively, these approaches reflect a broader trend of self-initiated adaptation aimed at sustaining professional practice and personal livelihood. Based on the findings, it was recommended that institutions should review and optimize lecturers' workloads to allow time for strategic planning, innovation, and engagement in income-generating or capacity-building activities.*

**Key words:** Innovative**,** strategies, surviving, economic, uncertainty, and lecturers

## Introduction

In recent years, Nigeria has grappled with persistent economic instability, which has affected virtually every sector, including education. Fluctuating oil prices, naira depreciation, inflation, and increasing costs of living have exacerbated hardship across the country. These

economic realities have had profound implications for university lecturers, particularly those in vocational education, who are not only responsible for imparting practical and entrepreneurial skills but must do so within an increasingly challenging socio-economic environment (Okoye & Arimonu, 2016).

Vocational education in Nigeria is designed to equip individuals with hands-on skills that promote self-reliance and employment readiness. However, the successful delivery of such education relies heavily on the well-being, motivation, and creativity of the lecturers. Unfortunately, vocational educators in Nigerian universities are contending with systemic challenges such as poor remuneration, delayed salaries, underfunding of institutions, lack of teaching resources, and limited professional development opportunities (Igbinedion & Ojeaga, 2020). These issues have not only impacted their standard of living but have also tested their ability to remain professionally effective.

In response to these conditions, many lecturers have adopted innovative survival strategies. These include engaging in private ventures, digital entrepreneurship, consultancy services, and online tutorials. Some have leveraged their vocational skills for small-scale production, while others have utilized social media platforms to market their services and expand their income base (Ayonmike, 2015; Idika et al., 2023; Akeke et al., 2025; Atah et al., 2022). These strategies reflect resilience, adaptability, and entrepreneurial thinking—qualities that vocational education seeks to instill in learners. However, these efforts are often carried out individually, without institutional support or coordinated frameworks, making them less sustainable and more challenging to scale.

Empirical evidence supports the increasing trend among lecturers to adopt diverse and innovative strategies to withstand current economic and institutional challenges. Eneogu, Chukwu, and Obiora (2023), in a comprehensive survey conducted at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, revealed that lecturers increasingly resorted to entrepreneurial ventures, scale-of-preference budgeting, and income-generating extracurricular activities—such as home gardening—as mechanisms for surviving the rising cost of living. These coping strategies were often necessary due to stagnating salaries, inflation, and insufficient institutional support.

In a similar vein, Ugwoke, Onu, and Agboeze (2024) documented the strategic shift among vocational lecturers toward the use of ICT tools, simulation-based instruction, and partnerships with external organizations to mitigate the constraints of limited teaching resources. These findings are corroborated by Ajuluchukwu et al. (2025), Akeke et al. (2025), and Ukah et al. (2022), who found that many vocational and business education lecturers leveraged digital tools and collaborative networks not only to enhance instructional delivery but also to ensure professional relevance and economic survival. Collectively, these studies underscore a broader adaptive trend where lecturers are no longer passive recipients of institutional conditions but proactive agents who innovate and respond strategically to resource and livelihood challenges within the educational sector.

In the same vein, Okoro (2024), Elom et al. (2025), Akeke et al. (2023), and Idike et al. (2025) observed that business education lecturers employed peer collaboration and reflective pedagogical techniques to address instructional challenges. Similarly, Akinpelu, Ilori, and Oke (2024) highlighted that private tutoring, consultancy, and skill-based services have become common adaptation mechanisms among technical and vocational educators in response to funding constraints. These adaptations reveal a broader trend of self-driven innovation as a coping strategy and a tool for professional survival.

Despite these efforts, several structural barriers limit the effectiveness of such strategies. These include lack of institutional and policy support, inadequate access to credit facilities, infrastructural decay, and administrative rigidity (Oviawe, 2016; Ogunode, Adeniyi, & Ukozor, 2024). The absence of a structured environment for entrepreneurial

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practice among lecturers has led to inconsistencies in outcome, limited scalability, and in many cases, burnout and disillusionment. Additionally, societal perceptions that undervalue vocational training, along with outdated curricula and poor funding, further frustrate the growth of innovative practices in the sector (Onoriode & Odjeba, 2012; Greensprings School, 2022).

Thus, while vocational education lecturers in Nigeria are not passive victims of economic decline, their attempts to innovate and adapt are often hampered by systemic neglect. The need to document, understand, and support these innovative strategies becomes essential—not only for improving the welfare of lecturers but also for ensuring the sustained delivery of quality vocational education. This study, therefore, seeks to explore the survival strategies employed by lecturers, the challenges they encounter, and the factors influencing the success of their innovations, with a view to informing policy interventions and institutional reforms.

**Problem of the Study**

Economic uncertainty has become a persistent challenge in Nigeria, marked by inflation, rising costs of living, unstable salaries, delayed payments, and declining public investment in education. Vocational education lecturers, who are key drivers of practical and entrepreneurial training, are among those significantly affected by these economic hardships. While their role is pivotal in equipping students with skills for self-reliance and national development, these lecturers often face conditions that threaten their own livelihood and professional productivity. Despite these challenges, anecdotal evidence suggests that many vocational education lecturers in Nigeria have developed or adopted various innovative survival strategies to navigate the turbulent economic terrain. These include entrepreneurial ventures, skill commercialization, digital teaching engagements, and informal consultancy services. However, these strategies are not well-documented or systematically understood, especially in terms of their effectiveness, sustainability, or institutional support.

More so, existing policies and academic literature pay minimal attention to how lecturers in vocational education, a field designed to promote innovation and resilience, are personally coping with and adapting to economic hardship. This gap in knowledge poses a risk not only to the well-being of the lecturers but also to the broader goals of vocational education and national workforce development. If left unaddressed, the continued lack of structured institutional backing and empirical understanding of these coping strategies may lead to professional burnout, reduced teaching quality, and eventual attrition of skilled vocational educators. Therefore, there is a pressing need to investigate the specific innovative strategies adopted by these lecturers, the factors influencing their choices, and the challenges they encounter. Doing so would provide empirical insights that could inform policy formulation, capacity development, and institutional support mechanisms. This study, thus, seeks to fill this gap by examining the innovative survival strategies employed by vocational education lecturers in Nigeria, within the context of ongoing economic uncertainty.

**Objectives of the Study**

The study examined innovative strategies for surviving economic uncertainty among lecturers of vocational education in Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Identify the various innovative strategies adopted by vocational education lecturers to cope with the prevailing economic uncertainties in Nigeria.
2. Examine the challenges encountered by vocational education lecturers in implementing these innovative survival strategies within the university system.

**Research Questions**

To guide the study, the following research questions were raised:

1. What innovative strategies are employed by vocational education lecturers in Nigeria to survive economic uncertainty?
2. What are the major challenges faced by vocational education lecturers in implementing innovative strategies for economic survival?

**Methodology**

This study employed a survey research design, which was considered appropriate for exploring the innovative strategies adopted by vocational education lecturers in Nigeria to navigate economic uncertainties. The survey design enabled the researcher to gather standardized data on participants' strategies and challenges through the use of a structured instrument. The population of the study comprised all eighty-two (82) lecturers of vocational education across Nigerian universities. Given the manageable size of the population, the entire group was studied without the use of any sampling technique. Data collection was carried out using a 14-item structured questionnaire titled *Innovative Strategies for Surviving Economic Uncertainty among Lecturers of Vocational Education (ISSEULVE).* The questionnaire was designed in two distinct clusters: Cluster B1 focused on coping strategies adopted by lecturers, while Cluster B2 addressed the implementation challenges they encounter during periods of economic instability.

To ensure the validity of the instrument, both its face and content validity were established through expert evaluation. Three specialists—two from Business Education and one from Measurement and Evaluation—reviewed the questionnaire. Their feedback helped to refine the items for clarity, relevance, and alignment with the study's objectives. The reliability of the instrument was tested through a pilot study involving 15 vocational education lecturers from Ebonyi State University, who were not part of the main study. The internal consistency of the questionnaire was determined using the Cronbach Alpha method, yielding reliability coefficients of 0.89 for Cluster B1, 0.94 for Cluster B2, and an overall coefficient of 0.96. These values indicated a high level of reliability and internal consistency of the instrument. In terms of data collection, the researcher, with the support of three trained research assistants, administered the questionnaires personally to the respondents. The purpose and process of the study were thoroughly explained to the participants. Out of the 82 copies distributed, 71 were duly completed and returned, representing a response rate of 86.6%, which was deemed adequate for analysis. The data analysis was conducted using descriptive statistical tools. Specifically, the mean and standard deviation were utilized to answer the research questions. This approach enabled the researchers to identify key patterns and variations in the responses, offering a clear understanding of the innovative strategies and associated challenges experienced by vocational education lecturers in managing economic uncertainty.

**Results of the Findings**

Research Question one

*What innovative strategies are employed by vocational education lecturers in Nigeria to survive economic uncertainty?*

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**Table 1: Descriptive Statistics on *innovative strategies are employed by vocational education lecturers in Nigeria to survive economic uncertainty***

| S/No | Items on Coping Strategies of Lecturers | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | Decision |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | I engage in personal businesses or entrepreneurial ventures to augment my income. | 71 | 3.2609 | 0.86431 | Agree |
| 2 | I apply prudent budgeting and personal financial planning to cope with economic strain. | 71 | 3.8261 | 0.49103 | Agree |
| 3 | I use online platforms and digital tools to deliver lessons despite limited resources. | 71 | 3.6087 | 0.78272 | Agree |
| 4 | I utilize alternative teaching materials like simulations and project-based learning. | 71 | 3.8261 | 0.38755 | Agree |
| 5 | I collaborate with other lecturers or organizations to share resources. | 71 | 3.8261 | 0.38755 | Agree |
| 6 | I provide private tutorials or consultancies outside my institution. | 71 | 3.6087 | 0.78272 | Agree |
| 7 | I have developed multiple streams of income to mitigate financial uncertainties. | 71 | 3.6522 | 0.71406 | Agree |
| | **Cluster Mean** | **71** | **3.6584** | **062999** | **Agree** |

The data in Table 1 revealed that all seven items have mean scores above the benchmark value of 2.50 on a 4-point rating scale, indicating that the respondents generally *agreed* with each statement. This suggests widespread adoption of various coping strategies among the lecturers surveyed. The highest-rated strategies include prudent budgeting and personal financial planning (Mean = 3.83, SD = 0.49), collaboration with others to share resources (Mean = 3.83, SD = 0.39), and use of alternative teaching materials (Mean = 3.83, SD = 0.39). These responses reflect proactive efforts to manage limited resources effectively and adapt teaching practices to economic challenges. Other well-rated strategies include use of online platforms and digital tools for lesson delivery (Mean = 3.61), engaging in private tutorials or consultancies (Mean = 3.61), and developing multiple streams of income (Mean = 3.65), all of which underscore the lecturers' inclination toward self-empowerment and resource diversification. Even engaging in personal businesses or entrepreneurial ventures (Mean = 3.26) was widely affirmed, further reinforcing that vocational education lecturers do not solely rely on their primary income sources but seek alternative livelihoods to ensure financial resilience.

The cluster mean of 3.66 indicates a high overall level of agreement on the implementation of these innovative survival strategies. The standard deviations across all items are relatively low, suggesting a consistent pattern of responses among the lecturers. Lecturers of vocational education in Nigeria employ a range of innovative strategies—including entrepreneurship, collaboration, digital adaptation, and financial planning—to navigate periods of economic uncertainty. These findings affirm that economic challenges have prompted creative and resilient responses within the academic community.

**Research question 2**

*What are the major challenges faced by vocational education lecturers in implementing innovative strategies for economic survival?*

**Table 2: Descriptive Statistics on major challenges faced by vocational education lecturers in implementing innovative strategies for economic survival**

| S/No | Items on Implementation Challenges | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | Decision |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 8 | Inadequate institutional support hinders my ability to implement effective strategies. | 71 | 3.6522 | 0.71406 | Agree |
| 9 | I experience difficulty accessing ICT tools and internet for instructional use. | 71 | 3.1739 | 0.93673 | Agree |
| 10 | I am burdened with excessive workloads, which limits time for innovation. | 71 | 3.6957 | 0.7029 | Agree |
| 11 | There is limited availability of instructional materials and facilities. | 71 | 3.5217 | 0.51075 | Agree |
| 12 | Lack of administrative encouragement reduces my motivation to try new strategies. | 71 | 3.913 | 0.2881 | Agree |
| 13 | I find it difficult to integrate survival strategies due to bureaucratic constraints. | 71 | 3.5217 | 0.99405 | Agree |
| 14 | Stress and burnout reduce my effectiveness in implementing coping strategies. | 71 | 3.5217 | 0.94722 | Agree |
| | **Cleuster Mean** | **71** | **3.5714** | **0.72768** | **Agree** |

The data in Table 2 reveals that all the items recorded mean values above the criterion mean of 2.50, indicating that the respondents *agreed* with each challenge item as being a significant impediment. The highest-rated challenge was lack of administrative encouragement (Mean = 3.91, SD = 0.29), which implies that institutional leadership may not be providing adequate motivation or recognition for innovation efforts. This can significantly affect lecturers' willingness to explore and sustain new strategies. Closely following is the challenge of excessive workload limiting innovation time (Mean = 3.70, SD = 0.70), and inadequate institutional support (Mean = 3.65, SD = 0.71), both of which highlight systemic barriers that make it difficult for lecturers to implement or sustain innovative practices. Other prominent challenges include limited access to instructional materials and facilities (Mean = 3.52), difficulty in integrating strategies due to bureaucracy (Mean = 3.52), and stress and burnout (Mean = 3.52), all pointing to environmental and operational stressors that dampen innovation. ICT and internet accessibility issues also emerged as a notable concern (Mean = 3.17, SD = 0.94), suggesting that digital infrastructure constraints are a tangible barrier to implementing online-based or tech-driven strategies. The cluster mean of 3.57 further confirms that lecturers generally perceive these challenges as valid and prevalent across their institutions. The standard deviations indicate a moderately consistent response pattern, though some variability is seen, especially in challenges related to access to ICT (SD = 0.94) and bureaucracy (SD = 0.99).

Vocational education lecturers in Nigeria face multifaceted challenges in implementing innovative strategies for economic survival. These include institutional bottlenecks, limited resources, administrative discouragement, workload pressure, and personal stress. Without strategic institutional reforms and support mechanisms, the capacity of these lecturers to innovate effectively under economic strain remains constrained.

**Discussion of Findings**

*Identify the various innovative strategies adopted by vocational education lecturers to cope with the prevailing economic uncertainties in Nigeria.*

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The findings of the study revealed that vocational education lecturers in Nigeria have adopted a variety of innovative strategies to navigate the challenges posed by ongoing economic uncertainties. These strategies include prudent financial management, entrepreneurial ventures, digital teaching innovations, and collaborative resource sharing. Such practices reflect the lecturers' resilience, adaptability, and strategic thinking in the face of limited institutional support and a challenging economic environment. This result supports the work of Eneogu, Chukwu, and Obiora (2023), who found that lecturers at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, employed survival strategies such as prioritizing personal expenditures, engaging in entrepreneurial activities, home gardening, and developing multiple income streams. These approaches were indicative of a shift towards self-reliance and economic diversification as critical responses to financial instability in academia.

Further aligning with previous research, the study revealed that digital and pedagogical innovations, such as the use of online teaching platforms, simulation-based learning, and project-based instructional methods, were widely embraced. This is consistent with the findings of Ugwoke, Onu, and Agboeze (2024), who noted that the integration of ICT tools and simulation models helped lecturers sustain instructional relevance despite inadequate resources. Similarly, collaboration among lecturers through shared resources and inter-institutional support emerged as a crucial survival strategy. The current study also echoes the findings of Okafor and Igbozuruike (2019), who reported that entrepreneurship lecturers incorporated real-world assignments and group projects to maintain student engagement and instructional quality. These teaching approaches represent an intentional shift towards innovation and practical relevance in the delivery of vocational education.

Moreover, the study found that many lecturers engaged in private tutoring and consultancy to supplement their income—an observation corroborated by Akinpelu, Ilori, and Oke (2024), who identified such entrepreneurial engagements as necessary coping mechanisms in the face of institutional funding deficits. These combined findings underscore the evolving role of vocational education lecturers as both educators and income earners navigating dual professional responsibilities. In summary, vocational education lecturers in Nigeria are not passive recipients of economic hardship but are actively developing innovative, multi-faceted responses. The findings highlight the urgent need for institutional recognition and support of these adaptive strategies through policies that promote training, funding opportunities, and flexible work conditions.

*Examine the challenges encountered by vocational education lecturers in implementing these innovative survival strategies within the university system*

The findings of the study further revealed that despite their willingness and capacity to innovate, vocational education lecturers in Nigeria face considerable challenges in implementing survival strategies effectively. Chief among these is the lack of administrative encouragement, which indicates an absence of institutional motivation, recognition, and policy support for innovation and alternative income generation. This observation is consistent with the work of Eneogu et al. (2023), who emphasized that institutional neglect can significantly undermine lecturers' coping efforts. Closely related challenges identified in the study include excessive workload and inadequate institutional support, both of which hinder lecturers from fully committing to innovative pursuits. These systemic inefficiencies reflect broader structural issues within Nigeria's higher education system.

Supporting this view, Amadi and Ochie (2022) reported that poor staffing levels and infrastructural deficits were primary obstacles to innovation in entrepreneurship education. These burdens not only limit the time lecturers can allocate to strategy development but also contribute to emotional fatigue and burnout. Other significant barriers identified include limited access to instructional materials and teaching facilities, bureaucratic red tape, and

psychological stress. These findings align with Chukwuemeka et al. (2023), who highlighted the impact of stress and inadequate institutional responsiveness on lecturers' adaptability and productivity. While access to ICT tools and internet connectivity was perceived as a less critical challenge compared to others, it remains a relevant concern, especially in rural and underserved areas. Okoro (2023) observed that poor digital infrastructure and underinvestment in ICT have hampered effective digital teaching among business education lecturers in the South-South region of Nigeria. Collectively, these challenges represent a blend of structural, logistical, and emotional impediments that constrain the potential of lecturers to implement survival strategies effectively. The findings suggest that unless educational institutions undertake comprehensive reforms to address administrative rigidity, workload management, infrastructural deficits, and technological limitations, the innovative efforts of lecturers will continue to be stifled.

## Conclusion

This study examined the innovative strategies employed by vocational education lecturers in Nigeria to survive the prevailing economic uncertainty, alongside the challenges hindering the effective implementation of such strategies. The findings revealed that lecturers have embraced a wide array of survival mechanisms, including digital and pedagogical innovations, entrepreneurial ventures, financial prudence, and collaborative resource sharing. These responses demonstrate their resilience, adaptability, and proactive engagement in ensuring both professional relevance and economic sustenance. However, the study also uncovered several challenges that undermine the success of these initiatives. Notably, institutional barriers such as lack of administrative support, excessive workloads, inadequate infrastructure, and limited access to digital tools continue to pose significant constraints. These challenges reflect systemic weaknesses within the higher education system that, if unaddressed, may diminish the lecturers' ability to thrive in an increasingly complex economic environment.

In sum, vocational education lecturers in Nigeria have shown commendable agency and innovation in the face of adversity. Yet, their efforts require structural and policy-level reinforcement to achieve sustained impact and scalability. The future of vocational education—and by extension, the socio-economic relevance of Nigerian universities—depends largely on how well institutions support these lecturers in navigating and overcoming current economic challenges.

## Implication of the Study

The findings of this study hold significant implications for educational policy makers, university administrators, and stakeholders in Nigeria's vocational education sector. First, the study highlights that vocational education lecturers are not merely passive recipients of institutional and economic limitations; rather, they are active agents deploying innovative strategies to maintain both personal economic stability and instructional effectiveness. This suggests a critical need for higher education systems to formally recognize and integrate such grassroots innovations into institutional frameworks. From a policy perspective, the study underscores the urgency of revisiting existing administrative structures and support mechanisms within Nigerian universities. The lack of administrative encouragement, excessive workloads, and poor infrastructure not only hinder lecturers' capacity to innovate but also risk undermining the quality and sustainability of vocational education in the long run. Therefore, policymakers must prioritize reforms that enable academic staff to function optimally, especially during periods of economic instability. For educational leaders and administrators, the study implies that fostering a culture of innovation, flexibility, and support is vital to the professional well-being and productivity of lecturers. Institutions that invest in

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digital infrastructure, entrepreneurial training, and collaborative platforms will be better positioned to harness the creativity and resilience of their academic staff. In addition, the findings suggest the importance of developing comprehensive staff development programs that address both pedagogical skills and economic resilience. By equipping lecturers with the tools and knowledge to diversify income and innovate instructionally, institutions can enhance their relevance and effectiveness in preparing students for 21st-century challenges. Finally, the study's findings also imply that sustainable vocational education in Nigeria depends not only on curriculum reforms or funding improvements but also on how well institutional systems respond to the realities faced by lecturers. Stakeholders must therefore adopt a holistic approach that merges strategic planning, resource provision, and human capacity development to promote lasting impact in the sector.

**Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Institutional Support and Policy Reform: Educational authorities and university management should develop and implement policies that actively support innovation among lecturers. This includes recognizing and rewarding entrepreneurial efforts, offering grants for innovative teaching practices, and institutionalizing flexible work arrangements.
2. Workload Management: Institutions should review and optimize lecturers' workloads to create room for strategic planning, innovation, and participation in income-generating or capacity-building activities. Recruiting additional academic staff where necessary would also help ease the burden.
3. Infrastructure and Resource Provision: Government and stakeholders in the education sector should prioritize the provision of adequate instructional materials, teaching facilities, and digital infrastructure to support effective content delivery and innovation in teaching.
4. Capacity Building and Training: Regular workshops, seminars, and training sessions should be organized to equip lecturers with contemporary skills in digital pedagogy, entrepreneurship, and financial literacy, thereby enhancing their adaptability to economic changes.
5. Strengthening Collaborative Networks: Universities should encourage inter-institutional and intra-institutional collaborations that enable resource sharing, joint project development, and peer support among lecturers. This will enhance innovation while fostering a sense of community.
6. Investment in ICT Access: Improved access to ICT tools and reliable internet connectivity—especially in rural or under-resourced institutions—should be prioritized. Government intervention and public-private partnerships can play a crucial role in bridging the digital divide.

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