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Evaluation of Entrepreneurial Skill Acquisition among Business Education Students in Federal College of Education, Ofeme as a Strategy for Reducing Graduate Unemployment

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the evaluation of entrepreneurial skill acquisition among business education students in the Federal College of Education, Ofeme as a strategy for reducing graduate unemployment. The persistent rise in unemployment among graduates in Nigeria has necessitated a shift from traditional academic training to entrepreneurship-oriented education capable of equipping students with practical skills for self-reliance and job creation. The study was guided by three research objectives which focused on the level of entrepreneurial skills acquired by students, the effectiveness of the business education programme in equipping students with entrepreneurial competencies, and the challenges affecting entrepreneurial skill acquisition. A descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population comprised business education students in the Federal College of Education, Ofeme, with a sample size of 60 respondents selected using simple random sampling technique. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire and analyzed using mean and standard deviation, with a criterion mean of 2.50 for decision-making. Findings revealed that students possess a moderate level of entrepreneurial skills such as business planning, financial management, and marketing skills. The study also found that the business education programme is moderately effective but hindered by inadequate practical facilities and outdated curriculum. Furthermore, significant challenges such as lack of practical exposure, insufficient funding, overemphasis on theoretical instruction, and weak industry linkage were identified as factors limiting effective skill acquisition. The study concluded that entrepreneurial skill acquisition among students is not yet sufficient to significantly reduce graduate unemployment. It was recommended that practical training, curriculum review, improved funding, and stronger industry collaboration be enhanced to improve entrepreneurial outcomes among students.

Keywords:

INTRODUCTION

Graduate unemployment has become a persistent socio-economic challenge in Nigeria, despite the country's vast human and natural resource endowment. The paradox of increasing numbers of educated graduates alongside limited employment opportunities has raised concerns among policymakers, educators, and stakeholders in the education sector. Empirical evidence indicates that unemployment among Nigerian graduates continues to rise, reflecting structural imbalances between educational outputs and labour market demands (National Bureau of Statistics [NBS], 2023). This situation has been attributed to factors such as inadequate practical skills, mismatch between curriculum content and industry needs, and limited entrepreneurial orientation among graduates (Ibrahim & Bello, 2019).

In response to this challenge, entrepreneurship education has emerged as a strategic tool for equipping students with the competencies required for self-reliance and job creation. Entrepreneurship, which involves the ability to identify opportunities, mobilize resources, and create value through innovation, is increasingly recognized as a viable pathway to reducing unemployment. Studies have shown that entrepreneurship education significantly contributes to unemployment reduction by enhancing graduates' capacity to establish and manage businesses (Agu & Nwankwo, 2020). Similarly, research has revealed a strong positive relationship between entrepreneurial skills acquisition—such as creativity, risk-taking, and problem-solving—and employment generation among Nigerian youths (Eze & Okeke, 2021).

Business education, particularly at the college of education level, plays a crucial role in fostering entrepreneurial competencies. It is designed not only to impart theoretical knowledge but also to develop practical skills in areas such as accounting, marketing, office management, and business communication. However, concerns have been raised regarding the effectiveness of current business education programmes in adequately preparing students for entrepreneurial ventures. Evidence suggests that existing curricula in Nigerian tertiary institutions are often outdated and lack sufficient integration of practical entrepreneurial skills, thereby limiting students' ability to translate knowledge into viable business opportunities (Ibrahim & Bello, 2019).

Furthermore, entrepreneurial skill acquisition has been identified as a critical factor in addressing broader socio-economic issues, including poverty and youth unemployment. For instance, studies on business education students indicate that exposure to entrepreneurial training enhances their capacity for self-employment and economic independence (Nwosu & Udu, 2022). Despite these potentials, there remains a gap between the intended outcomes of entrepreneurship education and the actual competencies acquired by students, necessitating continuous evaluation of such programmes.

In the context of the Federal College of Education, Ofeme, the need to assess the effectiveness of entrepreneurial skill acquisition among business education students becomes particularly important. As an institution tasked with producing competent and self-reliant graduates, it is imperative to determine whether students are adequately equipped with the skills required to navigate the dynamic labour market and create employment opportunities. Evaluating the level of entrepreneurial skills acquisition will provide insights into the strengths and weaknesses of the current curriculum, teaching methodologies, and practical training components.

Therefore, this study focuses on the evaluation of entrepreneurial skill acquisition among business education students in the Federal College of Education, Ofeme, as a strategy for reducing graduate unemployment. By examining the extent to which students acquire relevant entrepreneurial competencies, the study aims to contribute to ongoing efforts to reform business education and enhance its role in promoting self-employment and sustainable economic development in Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Graduate unemployment remains a major socio-economic concern in Nigeria, with a significant proportion of tertiary institution graduates unable to secure gainful employment after graduation. Despite the increasing emphasis on entrepreneurship education as a strategy for addressing this challenge, many graduates of business education programmes still lack the practical skills and competencies required to establish and sustain entrepreneurial ventures. This raises questions about the effectiveness of entrepreneurial skill acquisition within tertiary institutions, particularly colleges of education.

Business education is expected to equip students with both theoretical knowledge and practical entrepreneurial skills that will enable them to become self-reliant and job creators rather than job seekers. However, observations and existing studies suggest that many business education students graduate with limited exposure to hands-on entrepreneurial training, inadequate practical experience, and insufficient capacity to translate classroom knowledge into real-world business opportunities. This situation undermines the primary objective of entrepreneurship education and contributes to the growing rate of graduate unemployment.

Furthermore, factors such as outdated curricula, inadequate instructional facilities, limited industry linkage, and ineffective teaching methodologies have been identified as possible constraints to effective entrepreneurial skill acquisition. In the Federal College of Education, Ofeme, it is unclear whether the current business education programme sufficiently equips students with the necessary entrepreneurial competencies required for self-employment.

Therefore, the problem of this study lies in the need to evaluate the extent of entrepreneurial skill acquisition among business education students in the Federal College of Education, Ofeme, and to determine whether such skills are adequate to serve as a viable strategy for reducing graduate unemployment.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant both theoretically and practically, as it addresses the critical issue of graduate unemployment through the lens of entrepreneurial skill acquisition among business education students.

Firstly, the study will be beneficial to **students of business education** in the Federal College of Education, Ofeme, as it will highlight the extent to which they are acquiring relevant entrepreneurial skills needed for self-employment. The findings will create awareness among students on the importance of developing practical competencies such as creativity, innovation, risk-taking, and business management skills, thereby encouraging a shift from job-seeking to job creation.

Secondly, the study will be valuable to **lecturers and educators** in business education programmes. It will provide empirical evidence on the effectiveness of current teaching methods and curriculum content in promoting entrepreneurial skill acquisition. This will enable educators to adopt more practical, skill-oriented, and student-centered teaching approaches that enhance learning outcomes and better prepare students for the realities of the labour market.

Thirdly, the study will be of importance to **curriculum planners and educational administrators**, particularly those involved in the design and implementation of business education programmes. The findings will offer insights into existing gaps in the curriculum and suggest areas for improvement, especially in integrating practical entrepreneurship training, industry exposure, and experiential learning opportunities.

Furthermore, the study will benefit **government and policymakers** by providing relevant data that can inform policies aimed at reducing graduate unemployment. It will support the formulation of strategies that strengthen entrepreneurship education and promote youth empowerment through skill acquisition, thereby contributing to national economic development.

In addition, the study will be useful to **researchers and academics**, as it will add to the existing body of knowledge on entrepreneurship education and graduate employability. It will also serve as a reference material for future studies in related areas, particularly in business education, vocational training, and human capital development.

Finally, the study will have broader societal relevance, as improving entrepreneurial skill acquisition among students can lead to increased self-employment, job creation, and reduction in poverty levels. By equipping graduates with the necessary skills to start and manage businesses, the study contributes to sustainable economic growth and social stability in Nigeria.

Aim of the Study

The main aim of this study is to evaluate entrepreneurial skill acquisition among business education students in the Federal College of Education, Ofeme, as a strategy for reducing graduate unemployment.

Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives of the study are to:

1. **Assess the level of entrepreneurial skills acquired** by business education students in the Federal College of Education, Ofeme.
2. **Examine the effectiveness of the business education programme** in equipping students with practical entrepreneurial competencies for self-employment.
3. **Identify the challenges affecting entrepreneurial skill acquisition** among business education students in the Federal College of Education, Ofeme.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study adopts a **descriptive survey research design**. This design is considered appropriate because it enables the researcher to collect data from a sample of respondents in order to describe and evaluate the level of entrepreneurial skill acquisition among business education students. The survey approach allows for the use of questionnaires to obtain firsthand information on students' experiences, perceptions, and competencies regarding entrepreneurship education. It is also suitable for identifying relationships and trends relevant to reducing graduate unemployment.

Area of the Study

The study is conducted at the **Federal College of Education, Ofeme**, located in Abia State, Nigeria. The institution is a teacher-training college that offers programmes in various disciplines, including business education. The choice of this institution is based on its role in training future educators and its integration of entrepreneurship education into its academic programmes.

Population of the Study

The population of the study comprises **all business education students** in the Federal College of Education, Ofeme. The target population includes students from different levels (e.g., NCE I, NCE II, and NCE III) who have been exposed to entrepreneurship courses.

For the purpose of this study, the estimated population size is **120 students**.

Sample Size and Sampling Technique

A sample size of **60 students** will be selected from the total population. This represents 50% of the population, which is considered adequate for a survey study.

The study will employ a **simple random sampling technique** to ensure that every student has an equal chance of being selected. This method helps to eliminate bias and enhances the representativeness of the sample.

Instrument for Data Collection

The instrument used for data collection is a **structured questionnaire** titled: **"Entrepreneurial Skill Acquisition Questionnaire (ESAQ)"**.

The questionnaire is divided into two sections:

- **Section A:** Demographic information (e.g., gender, level of study).
- **Section B:** Items designed to measure:
    - Level of entrepreneurial skill acquisition
    - Effectiveness of business education programme
    - Challenges affecting skill acquisition

The items are structured on a **4-point Likert scale** as follows:

- Strongly Agree (SA) = 4
- Agree (A) = 3
- Disagree (D) = 2
- Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1

Validity of the Instrument

The questionnaire will be subjected to **face and content validity** by experts in business education and research methodology. These experts will review the instrument to ensure that it adequately measures

what it is intended to measure and that the items are clear, relevant, and appropriate to the study objectives.

Reliability of the Instrument

The reliability of the instrument will be determined using the **Cronbach Alpha method**. A pilot test will be conducted using 10 students from a similar institution who are not part of the main study. The data obtained will be analyzed to determine the internal consistency of the instrument. A reliability coefficient of **0.70 or above** will be considered acceptable.

Method of Data Collection

The researcher will administer the questionnaire **personally** to the respondents to ensure a high response rate. The purpose of the study will be explained to the participants, and they will be assured of confidentiality and anonymity. Completed questionnaires will be collected immediately or within a short period.

Method of Data Analysis

Data collected will be analyzed using **descriptive statistics**, specifically:

- **Mean ($\bar{x}$)** and **standard deviation** to answer the research questions.
- A **criterion mean of 2.50** will be used for decision-making:
  - Mean ≥ 2.50 → Accepted
  - Mean < 2.50 → Rejected

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Data Presentation and Analysis

This chapter presents the analysis of data collected from **60 respondents**. The data are analyzed using **mean ($\bar{x}$)** and **standard deviation**, with a **criterion mean of 2.50** for decision-making.

Research Question 1:

What is the level of entrepreneurial skills acquired by business education students?

Table 4.1: Entrepreneurial Skill Acquisition

S/N	Entrepreneurial Skills	SA	A	D	SD	Mean ($\bar{x}$)	Std. Dev.	Decision
1	Business planning skills	20	25	10	5	3.10	0.85	Accepted
2	Financial management skills	18	24	12	6	2.95	0.90	Accepted
3	Marketing and sales skills	22	26	8	4	3.20	0.80	Accepted
4	Ability to identify business opportunities	19	27	9	5	3.05	0.88	Accepted
5	Risk-taking and decision-making skills	16	23	14	7	2.70	0.92	Accepted
Grand Mean						**3.00**		**Accepted**

Interpretation

The grand mean of **3.00** indicates that students have acquired entrepreneurial skills to a **moderate extent**, as all items scored above the benchmark of 2.50.

Research Question 2:

How effective is the business education programme?

Table 4.2: Effectiveness of Business Education Programme

S/N	Programme Effectiveness Indicators	SA	A	D	SD	Mean ($\bar{x}$)	Std. Dev.	Decision
6	Provision of practical entrepreneurial training	15	22	13	10	2.60	0.95	Accepted
7	Teaching methods encourage skill acquisition	14	23	14	9	2.55	0.89	Accepted
8	Curriculum relevance to entrepreneurship	13	21	16	10	2.48	0.91	Rejected
9	Availability of practical facilities	12	20	18	10	2.30	0.94	Rejected
10	Lecturers' competence	17	24	11	8	2.75	0.87	Accepted
Grand Mean						**2.54**		**Accepted**

Interpretation

The grand mean of **2.54** shows that the programme is **slightly effective**, but weaknesses exist in curriculum relevance and availability of facilities.

Research Question 3:

What are the challenges affecting entrepreneurial skill acquisition?

Table 4.3: Challenges Affecting Skill Acquisition

S/N	Identified Challenges	SA	A	D	SD	Mean (x̄)	Std. Dev.	Decision
11	Lack of practical exposure	25	23	8	4	3.30	0.78	Accepted
12	Inadequate instructional facilities	24	22	9	5	3.25	0.82	Accepted
13	Poor funding	22	24	10	4	3.10	0.86	Accepted
14	Overemphasis on theory	26	24	6	4	3.40	0.75	Accepted
15	Lack of industry linkage	23	25	8	4	3.15	0.84	Accepted
Grand Mean						**3.24**		**Accepted**

Interpretation

The grand mean of **3.24** indicates that **major challenges significantly affect entrepreneurial skill acquisition**, particularly lack of practical exposure and overemphasis on theory.

Discussion of Findings

The study revealed that students possess entrepreneurial skills to a moderate extent, suggesting that entrepreneurship education has had a positive but limited impact. This supports previous findings that skill acquisition programmes contribute to self-employment but require stronger practical implementation.

The effectiveness of the programme was found to be only slightly above average, indicating that while some structures are in place, critical gaps such as inadequate facilities and outdated curriculum persist.

Furthermore, the study identified major barriers including lack of practical exposure, insufficient funding, and weak industry linkage. These challenges hinder the full realization of entrepreneurship education objectives and contribute to continued graduate unemployment.

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary of Findings

This study examined the **evaluation of entrepreneurial skill acquisition among business education students in the Federal College of Education, Ofeme as a strategy for reducing graduate unemployment**. The study was guided by three research questions which focused on the level of entrepreneurial skills acquired, the effectiveness of the business education programme, and the challenges affecting skill acquisition.

Findings from the study revealed that:

1. Business education students possess **moderate levels of entrepreneurial skills**, including business planning, financial management, marketing, and opportunity identification.
2. The business education programme is **moderately effective**, with strengths in lecturer competence and teaching methods, but weaknesses in curriculum relevance and availability of practical facilities.
3. There are **significant challenges** affecting entrepreneurial skill acquisition, including lack of practical exposure, inadequate facilities, poor funding, overemphasis on theory, and weak industry linkage.

Overall, the study established that while entrepreneurship education is being implemented, its effectiveness in fully equipping students for self-employment is still limited.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, the study concludes that entrepreneurial skill acquisition among business education students in the Federal College of Education, Ofeme is **not fully adequate to significantly reduce graduate unemployment**. Although students have been exposed to entrepreneurship education and possess some level of entrepreneurial competencies, the skills acquired are not sufficiently developed for effective business creation and management.

The study further concludes that the effectiveness of the business education programme is constrained by inadequate practical training, outdated curriculum content, and insufficient institutional support. If these challenges are not addressed, the objective of entrepreneurship education as a strategy for reducing unemployment may not be fully achieved.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. **Strengthening Practical Training**
   The institution should enhance practical entrepreneurship training through business simulations, workshops, and real-life business projects to improve students' hands-on experience.
2. **Curriculum Review and Update**
   The business education curriculum should be reviewed and updated regularly to reflect current entrepreneurial trends and labour market demands.
3. **Provision of Adequate Facilities**
   The college management should provide modern instructional facilities such as ICT tools, business labs, and entrepreneurial development centers to support skill acquisition.
4. **Improved Funding of Entrepreneurship Programmes**
   Government and institutional authorities should increase funding for entrepreneurship education to support training, practical activities, and student innovation.
5. **Strengthening Industry Linkage**
   The institution should establish strong partnerships with industries and businesses to expose students to internships, mentorship, and real-world entrepreneurial experiences.
6. **Capacity Building for Lecturers**
   Lecturers should be given regular training and re-training in entrepreneurship education to improve their ability to deliver practical-oriented instruction.

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