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## **STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION AMONG BUSINESS EDUCATION STUDENTS OF UNIVERSITIES IN NORTH-EAST, NIGERIA FOR SELF RELIANCE IN A DEPRESSED ECONOMY**

**Ahmed Abubakr**

Ahminaad54@gmail.com

Department of Arts and Social science Education, Federal University of Kashere Gombe state

**Catherine Yumma Dorcas**

yummsdorcas@gmail.com

Department of Business Education University of Nigeria Nsukka

**Nura Ismail**

nura4ismail@gmail.com

Department of Economic Jigawa State College of Education of education and Legal Studies Ringim

### **Abstract**

The aim of this study was to determine the strategies for improving entrepreneurship education among business education students of universities in the North East of Nigeria for self-reliance in a depressed economy. The study was guided by two research questions and two null hypotheses. The study adopted a survey research design due to the wide distribution of its' respondents. The population for the study was 187 final year students of business education. No sample was conducted due to the manageable size of the population. The instrument used for data collection was a 21–item questionnaire grouped in to two sections according to the research questions. The instrument was structured using 4–point rating scale. The questionnaire was validated by three experts and the reliability of the study was determined using Cronbach Alpha. The result of the reliability test yielded 0.71 showing that the instrument was reliable. Mean and standard deviation was used to answer the research questions and t-test statistics was used to test the two null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The results of the analysis revealed that the itemized strategies under instructional approaches and institutional strategies could be used to improve entrepreneurship education among business education students in universities in the North-East, Nigeria for self-reliance in a depressed economy. Among the recommendations based on the findings was that: business educators must ensure that their instructional delivery would ignite the spirit of entrepreneurship among the students. School administrators should update facilities for entrepreneurship education.

**Keywords:** Entrepreneurship, Business Education, Self-Reliance, Depressed Economy.

### **Introduction**

The rising unemployment among university graduates in Nigeria has placed significant pressure on the country's economic growth, particularly during this period of economic downturn. An economic depression refers to a decline in economic activities and development, leading to widespread poverty, high unemployment, and soaring inflation (Idris, 2021). A depressed economy is one that goes through an extended period of recession and sustained economic decline. Characteristics of an economic recession include reduced business activity,

decreasing prices, growing unemployment, rising stockpiles of unsold goods, and widespread public anxiety and panic. The primary purpose of introducing entrepreneurship education according to Lewis (2025). Was as a means to an end to the seemingly intractable unemployment problem. Entrepreneurship education can simply be a tool for securing youth employment and emancipation of other people through the acquisition of necessary knowledge and skills for self-reliance.

Entrepreneurship education is a form of specialized training designed to equip individuals with the skills, knowledge, and managerial abilities needed for self-employment, rather than depending on traditional employment. According to Aleru (2024), it involves preparing individuals to start and manage small businesses, carrying out all functions related to a product or service, while also addressing legal responsibilities, social obligations, and potential risks, all aimed at generating profit through self-employment. Nuhu (2023) also emphasized that entrepreneurship education significantly contributes to the nation's manpower development and promotes self-reliance, confidence, and employment among individuals. Entrepreneurship education encompasses a wide range of learning experiences designed to cultivate entrepreneurial thinking, attitudes, and competencies. It aims to develop the mindset and skills necessary for identifying opportunities, generating innovative ideas, launching startups, and managing business growth and innovation (Baggen & Gulikers, 2022). This form of education is not limited to business creation alone but also focuses on nurturing critical thinking, creativity, problem-solving, and resilience.

According to Ugocha and Odugwu (2015), entrepreneurship education serves four key purposes. First, it encourages individuals to take collective responsibility for the well-being and progress of society. Second, it instills core values such as respect for human dignity and the inherent worth of every individual. Third, it promotes a strong work ethic by fostering respect for the dignity of labor. Finally, it builds confidence in human capacity to make informed and rational choices, empowering individuals to navigate complex challenges and contribute meaningfully to societal development. The nation's economic growth and the employment of young people depend heavily on entrepreneurship education. Furthermore, in today's Nigerian society, entrepreneurship education is the most important training for industrial growth, technical emancipation, socioeconomic development, and functional education (Udoh & Etteh, 2023). Entrepreneurship is the process of organizing a business to deliver beneficial services that society needs (Keil, 2017). Entrepreneurship efforts are encouraged through ties linkages and associations between entrepreneurship resources and

opportunities of entrepreneurial ventures. Juliana et al, (2021), Posit that entrepreneurship is the willingness and the ability of an individual to seek out an investment opportunity, establish an enterprise and make it successful. Entrepreneurship plays an important role in employment generation and in the development of the economy. Entrepreneurship education is integrated into every programme in tertiary institutions; business education is not left out. Implementing entrepreneurship education is a key to making the student's entrepreneur job creators in the labour market after graduation. It is pertinent to note that entrepreneurship education is needed to expose business education graduates, on needed business skills for creating and managing business enterprises for better economic development (Bauman & Lucy, 2021).

According to Going (2016), one of the key functions of business education is to equip individuals with the necessary competencies, practical skills, and values required to perform specific job roles effectively, ultimately enabling them to become self-reliant and economically independent. Business education plays a vital role in preparing individuals not only for employment but also for entrepreneurial ventures.

To achieve this, students pursuing business education must be thoroughly equipped with entrepreneurship education that empowers them with innovative thinking, problem-solving abilities, and managerial skills. This comprehensive training enables them to start and manage their own businesses successfully, adapt to changing economic environments, and thrive as independent entrepreneurs. Additionally, it prepares them to excel in the modern workplace by fostering adaptability, collaboration, digital literacy, and effective communication skills that are increasingly in demand in today's dynamic and competitive job market (Nosakhare, 2023). Business education is defined as a field of study that aims to produce people with the necessary information, abilities, and mindset to harness resources and put them into a cooperative partnership that produces the commodities and services that satisfy the necessary needs (Uwagwu, 2021). Uwagwu further stated that, in the fields of clerical, stenographic, bookkeeping and accounting, data processing, marketing, sales, office administration, business ownership, and management, business education aids in the development of vocational competences, attitudes, and skills. Entrepreneurship education is essential in preparing business education students by equipping them with practical entrepreneurial skills that enable them to make effective use of available resources to create employment opportunities for themselves. This training becomes especially crucial in situations where paid employment is scarce or unavailable.

Through entrepreneurship education, students learn how to identify business

opportunities, develop viable business plans, manage limited resources efficiently, and take calculated risks (Schultz, 2022). It empowers them to establish their own ventures in various areas related to business education, such as accounting services, marketing consultancy, office management, business training, and digital entrepreneurship. By fostering creativity, innovation, and self-confidence, entrepreneurship education helps students become job creators rather than job seekers, thereby contributing to economic development and reducing unemployment. Ubulom & Igonikon (2021) opine that business education is entrepreneurial in form, in that it is concerned with the acquisition of pedagogical and professional competencies in industry and education necessary for personal use, for entry into the business world as an entrepreneur (employer of employee), or self-employed and for effective participation in the educational industry as a professional business teacher. Improving entrepreneurship education among the students of business education in Federal and State Universities in a depressed economy is imperative as the nation is struggling with recession, youth unemployment and low price of oil in the global market. Public universities need to identify the strategies to ensure that the implementation of entrepreneurship education and its practicum is effectively carried out in all programmes of study.

Accordingly, it is imperative to note that instructional strategies adopted by business educators could be used to improve the teaching of business education for entrepreneurship development among the students. Okafor (2021) opined that functional education is a key to effective practical skill development, intellectual capacity, development and innovative strategies that bring about job creation. It is not just enough to identify the benefits of improving entrepreneurship studies, but also the strategies for implementing this type of education. Reynolds (2021) is of the view that entrepreneurship education trains individual who tries to do or struggles to carry out an innovation, create new activities from old ones in a new way. Improving entrepreneurship education is important to eradicate unemployment and also stimulate economic development. An educational programme in the 21st century without entrepreneurship education would produce job seekers without the willingness and abilities to innovate or identify business opportunities. Upon this background, it is crucial to determine the strategies for improving entrepreneurship education among business education students of universities in the South East of Nigeria for self-reliance in a depressed economy.

### **Statement of the Problem**

A depressed economy refers to one that undergoes an extended period of recession and sustained economic decline. Key characteristics of such an economy include reduced business

activity, declining prices, surplus inventories, widespread public anxiety, and a rising rate of unemployment. In the context of business education, students and graduates are expected to gain practical business skills that enable them to become self-sufficient entrepreneurs. However, in reality, some of them possess minimal or no entrepreneurial skills and end up relying on society for support, rather than becoming self-reliant and contributing to economic growth.

The extent to which the entrepreneurship education programme is implemented in universities in the North East, Nigeria, calls for revalidation as graduates of business education are in the bondage of unemployment. The researchers are worried about the danger and wonder if entrepreneurship programmes are implemented to achieve their objective, especially in a depressed economy. This needs to be investigated to reduce the problem of unemployment and job creation in society. The problem of improving entrepreneurship education among business education students of universities in the North East, Nigeria, for self-reliance in a depressed economy forms the basis of the study.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The main purpose of this study was to determine the strategies for improving entrepreneurship education among business education students of universities in the North East, Nigeria, for self-reliance in a depressed economy. Specifically, the study sought to determine the:

1. Instructional strategies for improving entrepreneurship education among business education university students in North East Nigeria for self-reliance in a depressed economy.
2. Institutional strategies for improving entrepreneurship education among business education university students in the North East, Nigeria, for self-reliance in a depressed economy.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions guided the study;

1. What are the instructional strategies for improving entrepreneurship education among business education university students in the North East, Nigeria, for self-reliance in a depressed economy?
2. What are the institutional strategies for entrepreneurship education among business education university students in the North East, Nigeria, for self-

reliance in a depressed economy?

## Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance

Ho<sub>1</sub>: There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of federal and state business education university students on the instructional strategies for improving entrepreneurship education for self-reliance in a depressed economy.

Ho<sub>2</sub>: There is no significant difference between the mean rating of federal and state business education university students on the institutional strategies improving entrepreneurship education for self-reliance in a depressed economy.

## Methodology

The study adopted a survey research design. A survey research design, according to Nworgu (2015), is one in which a group of people or items are studied by collecting and analyzing data from only a few people or items considered to be representative of the entire group. The area of the study was the North-Eastern states of Nigeria. The population of the study was 187 final year students of business education in the 3 public universities offering business education. The universities are ( Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University of Technology Bauchi ATBU, Modibbo Adama University of Technology Yola, MAUTECH and University of Maiduguri (UNIMAID). The selected universities have final year business education students. No sampling was carried out due to the manageable nature of the population. A 20-item structured questionnaire developed by the researcher after an extensive literature review was used to collect data for the study. It was divided into two clusters according to the two research questions that guided the study. Cluster A had 10 items on the instructional strategies for improving entrepreneurship education among business education students, and Cluster B had 10 items on the institutional strategies for improving entrepreneurship education among business education students of universities. The instrument was validated by three experts, and the comments and their contributions guided the modification of the final instrument used for data collection.

The internal consistency of the instrument was determined using Cronbach's Alpha, and the coefficient of the pilot test conducted in Jigawa State yielded 0.71, indicating that the instrument is reliable. Four-point Likert scale was used for the study (Strongly Agree- SA, Agree -A, Disagree -D and Strongly Disagree -SD) with the numerical value of 4,3, 2 and 1 assigned to them, respectively. The instrument was administered and collected by the researchers and 3 trained research assistants. Out of 187 copies of the questionnaire distributed,

170 copies were properly filled and returned for data analysis, representing 91 percent return rate. Mean and standard deviation were used for data analysis, and the decision was based on the principle of upper and lower limits of the mean rating. The null hypotheses were tested at a 0.05 level of significance using a t-test. Where the t-value obtained is less than the critical value, the null hypothesis is not significant; otherwise, the null hypothesis will be significant.

## Results

**Table 1: Mean rating with standard deviation of university students on instructional strategies for improving entrepreneurship education among business education students in North East Nigeria**

S/NO	ITEMS STATEMENT	$\bar{X}$	SD	Remark
1	Collaborative teaching methods should be adopted for developing multiple skills for Students	3.34	0.70	Agree
2	Using real-world problems as one way of making learning more meaningful	3.10	0.72	Agree
3	Using flexible grouping to meet the academic needs of all Students	3.19	0.83	Agree
4	Assessing students' knowledge about a topic before beginning a new unit.	3.19	0.73	Agree
5	Using my knowledge of students' strengths, talents, and abilities to plan lessons and units.	3.32	0.89	Agree
6	developing lessons and units that can be adapted to the whole class, a large group of students, or a small group of students	2.89	0.97	Agree
7	Review the objectives of lessons or curriculum units and increase the complexity as needed to meet the needs of students	3.16	0.81	Agree
8	Analyzing lessons or curriculum units and make decisions to eliminate or change teaching and learning activities.	3.33	0.71	Agree
9	Collect information about students' strengths, abilities, interests, and learning styles.	3.29	0.74	Agree
10	Schedule class time for students to pursue self-selected interests	3.40	0.63	Agree
11	<b>Cluster mean and SD</b>	3.22	0.77	Agree

The data in Table 1 show that the overall mean rating ranges from 2.89 to 3.40, indicating that the respondents agree with the itemized instructional strategies for improving entrepreneurship among business education students. The cluster mean of 3.22 and standard deviation of 0.77 further indicate acceptance. The low cluster mean of 0.77 signifies that the respondents have a consensus opinion in their responses.

**Table 2: Mean rating and standard deviation on the institutional strategies for improving functional entrepreneurship education among business education students in universities in the North East.**

S/NO	ITEMS STATEMENT	$\bar{X}$	SD	Remark
1	University administrators should support entrepreneurship with adequate funding	3.27	0.76	Agree
2	Students should be properly supervised in practical entrepreneurial work by their instructors	3.26	0.73	Agree
3	Provision should be made for adequate power for the machines	3.16	0.86	Agree
4	Establishment of functional business centers	3.32	0.82	Agree
5	Modern facilities for entrepreneurship development should be supplied by the school Administrators	3.18	0.81	Agree
6	Reviewing the curriculum of the school in implementing the entrepreneurship programme	3.26	0.77	Agree
7	Sponsoring business education students in industrial and business market visitations	3.30	0.69	Agree
8	Inviting government support in the entrepreneurship development of business education students	3.49	0.61	Agree
9	Monitoring the implementation of business education entrepreneurship projects by students	3.12	0.87	Agree
10	Cluster mean and Standard Deviation	3.28	0.79	Agree

Table 2 revealed that the overall mean rating ranges from 3.12 to 3.49, indicating that the 11 items were accepted by the respondents as the institutional strategies for improving entrepreneurship education among business education students of Universities in the North East, Nigeria for self-reliance in a depressed economy. The overall cluster mean was 3.28 indicating agreement. The low cluster standard deviation of 0.79 shows that the respondents had similar views on all the items as institutional strategies for improving entrepreneurship education among business education students of universities in the North East, Nigeria for self-reliance in a depressed economy.

### Hypothesis 1

**Table 3: T-test result on the mean responses of male and female university students on the instructional strategies for improving entrepreneurship among business education students in a depressed economy.**

Variables	X	SD	N	df	D	t-cal	t-tab	Decision
Male	3.23	0.79	187	185	0.05	0.195	1.968	Not Significant
Female	3.21	0.75	75					Significant

Results in Table 3 show that the calculated t-value, at 0.05 level of significance and 291 degrees of freedom, is 0.195. This invariably means that there is no significant difference between the mean response of male and female university students on the instructional strategies for improving entrepreneurship among business education students in the South East, Nigeria, for self-reliance in a depressed economy.

## Hypothesis 2

**Table 4: T-test result on the mean responses of male and female university students on the institutional strategies for improving entrepreneurship among business education students in a depressed economy.**

Variables	X	SD	N	df	D	t-cal	t-tab	Decision
Male	3.25	0.72	187					
				185	0.05	0.684	0.968	Not
Female	3.32	0.81	75					Significant

Table 4 shows that the calculated t-value for 11 items at 0.05 level of significance and 291 degree of freedom is 0.684. Since the critical value of 1.968 is more than the t calculated value of 0.684, the hypothesis is therefore not significant for these items. This implies that no significant difference existed between the mean rating of male and female university students on the institutional strategies for improving entrepreneurship education among business education students of universities in the North Eastern states of Nigeria for self-reliance in a depressed economy.

## Findings

Based on the data analyzed, the following were found:

1. The itemized instructional strategies are needed for improving entrepreneurship education among business education students of universities in the North East, Nigeria, for self-reliance in a depressed economy.
2. There is no significant difference between the mean rating of male and female university students on the instructional strategies for improving entrepreneurship education among business education students of universities in the North-East, Nigeria, for self-reliance in a depressed economy.
3. Institutional strategies are needed for improving entrepreneurship education among business education students of universities in the North-East, Nigeria, for self-reliance in a depressed economy.

4. No significant difference exists in the mean rating of male and female university students on the institutional strategies for improving entrepreneurship education among business education students of universities for self-reliance in a depressed economy.

### **Discussion of Findings**

The result of the study with respect to research question one reveals that the 10 items on instructional strategies for improving entrepreneurship among business education students in universities in the North-East, Nigeria, were accepted by the respondents. Some of the instructional strategies include relating their teaching to the challenges of unemployment, integrating entrepreneurship education into business education courses, and encouraging students to undertake practical projects, among others. The findings of the study are in agreement with Okafor (2021) that teachers' instructional approaches can serve as a means for improving the development of entrepreneurship among the students. Noviana (2023) asserted that instructional planning in schools should be used to improve entrepreneurship skill development in the learners. The null hypothesis was not significant, indicating that the respondents' opinions did not differ remarkably.

With respect to research question two, the result of the study indicated that all 10 items under institutional strategies for improving entrepreneurship education among business education students were all agreed. Some of the items are: university administrators should support entrepreneurship with adequate funds, students should be properly supervised, adequate and alternative power should be provided for the use of entrepreneurship education on others. The findings are in agreement with Jardim (2021). That entrepreneurship education is best promoted by school administrators who have an interest. The result of the null hypothesis showed no significance.

### **Conclusions**

Improving entrepreneurship education among business education students in North-East, Nigeria, requires a multifaceted approach that integrates practical training, curriculum enhancement, access to funding and resources, networking, and promotion of an entrepreneurial mindset. By fostering a supportive ecosystem that leverages technology, government support and industry partnerships, universities can empower students with the skills, knowledge and confidence to start and grow successful **businesses**. This, in turn, will contribute to the region's economic development, job creation, and innovation, ultimately positioning North-East, Nigeria as a hub for entrepreneurship and economic growth.

## Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were proposed:

1. Business educators should design instructional approaches that foster a passion for entrepreneurship development in students
2. Instructional procedures should be complemented with hands-on practical experience to achieve effective entrepreneurship education outcomes.
3. School administrators should upgrade and modernize entrepreneurship facilities to support functional entrepreneurship education programs, and schools must invest in modern tools, equipment, and resources that simulate real business environments.
4. Stakeholders in education should provide adequate institutional and financial support for entrepreneurship training, and Students should be supported through well-structured and functional entrepreneurship development programs.

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