

INFLUENCE OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION ON THE ACQUISITION OF ENTREPRENEURIAL SKILLS AND INTENTIONS AMONG BUSINESS EDUCATION STUDENTS IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN THE NORTH-EASTERN ZONE OF NIGERIA.

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Abstract

This study investigated the influence of entrepreneurship education on the acquisition of entrepreneurial skills and intentions among Business Education students in tertiary institutions in Nigeria's North-Eastern zone. The research was motivated by the persistent unemployment among graduates, despite mandatory entrepreneurship education in the curriculum. Two research questions and two hypotheses were formulated for the study at a significance level of 0.05. A mixed-methods explanatory design was employed, integrating quantitative data from 269 students using a structured questionnaire and qualitative insights from 11 class representatives through interviews. Findings revealed that entrepreneurship education significantly enhanced students' technical competencies such as communication proficiency, problem-solving, and ICT application with a weighted mean of 3.07. It also positively shaped entrepreneurial intentions, including students' desire to start businesses and develop leadership and opportunity-recognition skills, with a weighted mean of 3.16. A significant gender difference was found in technical skill acquisition ($p < 0.05$), favouring male students, while state-based analysis showed varied levels of influence on entrepreneurial intention. The study concluded that entrepreneurship education is a vital catalyst for job creation, self-reliance, and national development. It recommends improved pedagogical approaches and infrastructure support in tertiary institutions to bolster entrepreneurial capacity and reduce youth unemployment in Nigeria.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship education, entrepreneurial skills, entrepreneurial intention, Business Education, technical skills, tertiary institutions, North-Eastern Nigeria.

Introduction

Entrepreneurship necessitates being creative in the establishment of new ventures and taking risks to capitalize on possibilities. It also necessitates optimal resources to generate profit. Entrepreneurship shows a person's ability to take risks and combine factors of production to produce goods and services. It may also reflect a person's willingness and capacity to search for investment opportunities in their immediate environment and to be strategically positioned to build and manage a business, based on prospects. Entrepreneurship is the process of recognizing, developing, and realizing a vision, which might be an original concept, an opportunity, or simply a better method to do something new. It is the act of establishing a firm, arranging business transactions, and taking risks to profit from developed entrepreneurial abilities.

Entrepreneurship education encourages a shift from a "take-a-job mentality" to a "make-a-job mentality," offering youths pathways to financial independence, job creation, innovation, and economic growth. In Nigeria, higher education institutions provide programs that equip students with opportunities to work for themselves and pursue both self and paid employment. However, many students fail to fully utilize their entrepreneurial potential, which could enhance their skills and expand their career options. Entrepreneurship education, as described by Amadi (2014), equips tertiary students with the skills, ideas, and managerial competence necessary for self-employment rather than job-seeking. It provides knowledge, attitudes, values, and competencies that enable learners to tackle

life's challenges and apply innovative solutions across various areas (Brown, 2014). This type of education fosters positive behavioural shifts, promoting entrepreneurial mindsets and actions. In Nigeria, entrepreneurship education has been integrated into tertiary institutions to address the nation's rising graduate unemployment. It aims to empower students with entrepreneurial capacities, thinking, and self-reliance, contributing to economic wealth creation and national development. The goal is to prepare students to become responsible and enterprising youths capable of self-employment.

Entrepreneurship education is the formal process of equipping students with entrepreneurial concepts, behaviour, culture, skills, and awareness to enable them to identify opportunities, and start, manage, and grow businesses. It is a critical component of higher education as it inspires confidence and motivation for students to pursue entrepreneurial careers. By fostering relevant abilities, attitudes, and knowledge, it aims to prepare Business Education students for self-employment and labour creation, thereby reducing unemployment and transitioning Nigeria from a consumer to a producer nation (Okah & Odelola, 2015). According to Mullins (2014), entrepreneurship education systematically imparts job-related knowledge and attitudes for effective entrepreneurial performance. It encompasses three dimensions: state of mind (beliefs, values, attitudes), behaviour (skills like decision-making and opportunity recognition), and self-efficacy development.

Entrepreneurial skills encompass the competencies, knowledge, attitudes, and practical experience required to effectively manage and run a business. Higher education aims to instil these skills in students across disciplines, enabling them to create value, identify opportunities, and make firm career commitments, whether in self-employment, business ventures, or organizational roles (Ezenwene, 2018). These skills involve turning ideas into action (Nwabufo, 2019) and include personal qualities such as self-confidence, readiness, bravery, empathy, persistence, and vision (Salgado-Banda, 2015). Acquiring entrepreneurial skills enhances students' intention and self-efficacy, preparing them for income-generating or wage-earning projects with specialized technical abilities (Gidado, 2019).

Technical skills are specialized knowledge and competencies that are required to complete difficult actions and tasks. Entrepreneurs with effective technology abilities can use software and other digital approaches to manage projects, track sales and revenue, and measure business success, allowing them to have specialized knowledge and procedures needed to execute any function inside an organization. Oral and written communication skills, problem-solving skills, organizational skills, environmental monitoring, technological skills, and the implementation and use of network-building skills, management skills, coaching, and team-playing skills are all examples of technical skills.

Business Education equips students with the skills, knowledge, attitudes, and competencies necessary for employment, career growth, and self-sufficiency, fostering their productivity and societal contribution (Nwokike, 2016). It focuses on preparing learners for business operations and entrepreneurial empowerment, enabling vocational use and job creation. A key component, Office Technology and Management, trains students for office tasks and self-employment, providing them with entrepreneurial skills to achieve paid work, self-reliance, and self-actualization.

Colleges of education in Nigeria focus on training teachers for certification in education or related fields, while polytechnics train students in technical, applied sciences, and managerial skills. Polytechnics offers a two-year National Diploma (ND) and a Higher National Diploma (HND) after completing a four-year program, preparing students for self-employment and job creation, aligned with Nigeria's economic and industrial needs. Higher institutions aim to provide students with knowledge, skills, and quality education for future readiness. However, not all North-Eastern Nigerian schools offer Business Education programs, so the study includes Office Technology and Management students. Entrepreneurial intention increases the likelihood of starting a solo firm. Individual states of mind that orient attention, experience, and behaviours toward the concept of establishing a new enterprise are referred to as entrepreneurial intentions. Entrepreneurial intention is a state of mind that directs and guides an individual toward the conception, development, and implementation of a new business enterprise (Katz, 2014). An intention is a cognitive manifestation of an individual's desire to change behaviour and stimulate entrepreneurial intent, both of which are necessary for a business concept and effective operation. Therefore, it is a vital virtue that students should develop in tertiary

institutions, as it prepares the route for them to achieve their own goals of becoming independent proprietors and earning a living. It frequently entails aspiration, desire, and the urge to stand on one's feet (Pillis & Reardon, 2017) As a result, intention can be thought of as characteristic of new businesses. Thus, for the sake of this study, entrepreneurial intention will be defined as an individual's desire to become an entrepreneur to improve.

Emerging countries, including Nigeria, face the challenge of finding productive employment for graduates. Despite the inclusion of entrepreneurship education as a mandatory course for Business Education students, many graduates in North-Eastern Nigeria remain unemployed and fail to utilise entrepreneurial skills, which could help them start businesses. This unemployment has been linked to various social vices, including corruption, terrorism, and cybercrime. Questions arise about whether these students were adequately exposed to entrepreneurship education or simply lacked the willingness or abilities to use it. A researcher aims to investigate whether entrepreneurship education in North-Eastern Nigeria effectively influences Business Education students' entrepreneurial skills and intentions, as its failure could perpetuate the production of ill-equipped graduates and hinder growth. The study seeks to explore potential modifications in teaching patterns and approaches to enhance the impact of entrepreneurship education on students' self-employment capabilities and overall development.

Research Questions

The following research questions are raised to guide this study.

1. To what extent does entrepreneurship education influence the acquisition of technical skills in Business Education and Office Technology and Management students?
2. To what extent does entrepreneurship education influence the entrepreneurial intention of Business Education students in Colleges of Education and Polytechnics?

Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses are postulated in line with the research questions and was tested at a significance level of 0.05

H₀₁: There is no significant difference between the mean responses of male and female students on the extent to which entrepreneurship education influences the acquisition of technical skills in colleges of education and polytechnics.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference among the mean responses of Business Education students on the extent to which entrepreneurship education influences entrepreneurial intention, based on states.

Methodology

A descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population comprised 864 NCE III Business Education students in Colleges of Education and ND II Office Technology and Management students in Polytechnics in the North-Eastern zone of Nigeria during the 2021/2022 academic session. A sample size of 269 respondents was selected based on the recommendation of Cohen et al. (2007). Proportional stratified random sampling technique was used to distribute the sample across the institutions, while further stratification based on gender was employed to ensure adequate representation of respondents.

The instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled *Influence of Entrepreneurship Education on Entrepreneurial Skills and Intention Questionnaire (QIEEESI)*. The instrument consisted of 89 items designed to elicit responses on the influence of entrepreneurship education on technical skills, financial skills, marketing skills, human resource management skills, entrepreneurial skills, entrepreneurial intention, and entrepreneurial self-efficacy among students. The questionnaire was structured on a 4-point Likert-type scale of Very High Extent (4), High Extent (3), Low Extent (2), and Very Low Extent (1). The instrument was validated by experts in Business Education and Measurement and Evaluation, while reliability was established using Cronbach alpha. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions, while Independent

Samples t-test and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) were used to test the hypotheses at the 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Research Question 1: To what extent does entrepreneurship education influence the acquisition of technical skills of business education students in Colleges of Education and Polytechnics?

Table 1: Respondents' ratings on the influence of entrepreneurship education on the acquisition of technical skills of business education students

S/N	Item Statements	\bar{X}	SD	Remark
1.	Entrepreneurship education has helped me to demonstrate proficiency with Microsoft Word.	3.38	0.82	V. High Extent
2.	Entrepreneurship education assists students to operate qualitatively with minimal or no supervision.	3.14	0.95	High Extent
3.	Entrepreneurship education has assisted students to have communication skills proficiency.	3.12	0.98	High Extent
4.	Entrepreneurship education has helped me to solve problems by manipulating a computer system.	2.68	1.13	High Extent
5.	Knowledge of entrepreneurship education has assisted me in operating different business machines to meet societal needs.	3.12	1.04	High Extent
6.	Entrepreneurship education has helped students to keep up with the latest information and technological trends.	3.04	1.00	High Extent
7.	Knowledge of entrepreneurship education has helped students to write mailable letters.	3.06	1.01	High Extent
8.	Knowledge of entrepreneurship education has helped students to accurately process information on the job.	3.03	1.11	High Extent
Weighted average		3.07	1.01	High Extent

Source: Field Survey, 2023

The data in Table 1 reveal the mean and standard deviation of responses on the perceived influence of entrepreneurship education on the acquisition of technical skills of business education students in colleges of education and polytechnics. The Table shows that the respondents claimed that entrepreneurship education had helped them demonstrate proficiency with Microsoft Word to a very high extent mean scores of 3.38, assisted them in operating qualitatively with little or no supervision and helped students of business education to a high extent. This statement is supported by mean scores of 3.14, and 3.12, respectively. The respondents also stated that knowledge of entrepreneurship education had assisted them in problem-solving by using a computer system. The respondents also stated that entrepreneurship education has assisted them in operating various business machines to meet societal needs and that entrepreneurship education has greatly aided students of business education in keeping up with the most recent information technological trends to high extend. The mean score for these constructions was 2.68, 3.12, and 3.04, respectively. The respondents further stated that knowledge of entrepreneurship education had helped students compose mailable letters and had greatly aided them in effectively processing information on the job as business education students. These assertions were backed up by mean scores of 3.06 and 3.03, respectively.

The 8-item constructs had a standard deviation that ranged from 0.82 to 1.13. This indicates that the responses were not widely distributed since they are near the mean. Table 6 displays a total calculated weighted mean and standard deviation of 3.07 and 1.01, respectively, indicating that all eight components in the construct have a significant influence on technical skills. This suggests that business education students' technical skills are favourably influenced by entrepreneurship education to a high extent. (mean = 3.07, SD =1.01).

Research Question 2: To what extent does entrepreneurship education influence the entrepreneurial intention of business education students in Colleges of Education and Polytechnics?

Table 2: Responses ratings on the influence of entrepreneurship education on entrepreneurial intention of business education students in colleges of education and polytechnics

S/N	Item Statements	\bar{X}	SD	Remark
9.	With knowledge of entrepreneurship education, I want to become a business owner.	3.22	1.01	High Extent
10.	Owning my business is very appealing and important to me.	3.15	1.07	High Extent
11.	Entrepreneurship education has helped prepare me to be my boss.	3.17	0.97	High Extent
12.	Entrepreneurship education has helped students to have the necessary leadership abilities to be entrepreneurs.	3.31	0.97	Very High Extent
13.	With knowledge of entrepreneurship education I intend to start my business as soon as possible.	3.26	0.85	Very High Extent
14.	With different training in entrepreneurial skills, students are equipped with skills needed for identifying business opportunities.	3.03	0.95	High Extent
15.	With knowledge of entrepreneurship education has helped students to leverage commercial ideas in society.	2.93	1.06	High Extent
16.	Knowledge of entrepreneurship education has helped me to be attracted to becoming an entrepreneur as a career.	3.20	0.94	High Extent
17.	Entrepreneurship education has helped students to realize their business potential.	3.13	0.94	High Extent
18.	For me, being an entrepreneur has more benefits than drawbacks.	3.26	0.96	Very High Extent
19.	With knowledge of my entrepreneurship education, I will have a high probability of success.	3.06	1.00	High Extent
Weighted average		3.16	0.97	High Extent

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Data in Table 2 shows the mean and standard deviation of responses on the perceived influence of entrepreneurship education on the entrepreneurial intention of business education students in colleges of education and polytechnics. The table reveals that the respondents indicated that with knowledge of entrepreneurship education, they want to become a business owner, owning my business is very appealing and important to me, and entrepreneurship education has helped in preparing me to be my boss to a high extent (mean = 3.22, 3.15 and 3.17 respectively). Also, the respondents indicated that entrepreneurship education has helped students to have the necessary leadership abilities to be entrepreneurs, with knowledge of entrepreneurship education they intend to start their business as soon as possible and with different training in entrepreneurial skills to a very high extent. These positions were supported by mean scores of 3.31 and 3.26 respectively. In the same way, the respondents indicated that students are equipped with skills needed for identifying business opportunities to a high extent by students of business education with knowledge of entrepreneurship education has helped students to leverage commercial ideas in society, and knowledge of entrepreneurship education has helped me to be attractive of becoming an entrepreneur as a career and entrepreneurship education has helped students to realize their business potential to a high extent by students of business education. These are supported by mean scores of 3.03, 2.93, 3.20 and 3.13 respectively. In addition, the respondents indicated that for me, being an entrepreneur has more benefits than drawbacks and with knowledge of my entrepreneurship education, I will have a high probability of success to a high extent

(mean =3.26 and 3.06).

All the 11-item constructs have standard deviations ranging from 0.85 to 1.07. This means that the responses of the respondents are not dispersed but cluster around their means. Table 11 shows a grand calculated weighted mean and standard deviation of 3.16 and 0.97, which indicates that all the constructs influence their entrepreneurial intention to a high extent. This implies that entrepreneurship education positively influences the entrepreneurial intention of business education students to a high extent (mean = 3.16, SD = 0.97).

Hypotheses

H01: There is no significant difference between the mean responses of male and female business education students on the extent to which entrepreneurship education influences the acquisition of technical skills in colleges of education and polytechnics.

Table 3: T-test result for the difference between the mean responses of male and female respondents regarding the influence of entrepreneurship education on the acquisition of technical skills in colleges of education and polytechnics

Group	N	Mean	SD	t-cal	Df	p-value	Decision
Male	146	3.83	0.28	26.70	267	0.00	Rejected
Female	123	2.17	0.69				

Source: Field survey, 2023

P<0.05

Data in Table 3 reveals that there were 146 male respondents and 123 female respondents in the North-Eastern zone. The male and female respondents’ responses show that entrepreneurship education positively influences the technical skills of business education students to a high extent ($\bar{x} = 3.83$; SD = 0.28) and ($\bar{x} = 2.17$; SD = 0.69). Their responses were close to the mean as the standard deviations were very low. The table reveals that there is a significant difference between the mean responses of male and female students regarding the influence of entrepreneurship education on the technical skills of business education students ($t_{267} = 26.70$, P<0.05). Therefore, the null hypothesis that states that there is no significant difference between the mean responses of male and female business education students on the extent to which entrepreneurship education influences the acquisition of technical skills in Colleges of Education and Polytechnics was rejected. This implies that male and female students differ significantly in their responses regarding the influence of entrepreneurship education on technical skills. Their responses show that male students rated the influence of entrepreneurship education on technical skills higher than the female students did, in business education (mean difference = 1.66).

H02: There is no significant difference in the mean responses of business education students on the extent to which entrepreneurship education influences entrepreneurial intention based on states

Table 4: ANOVA result of the difference in the mean responses of business education students on the influence of entrepreneurship education on entrepreneurial intention based on states

States	N	Mean	SD	F	Df	Sig.	Decision
Adamawa	60	3.78	0.40	20.833	5, 263	0.00	Rejected
Taraba	65	3.10	1.37				
Yobe	28	3.27	1.07				
Gombe	31	3.57	0.17				
Bauchi	24	3.06	0.13				
Borno	61	2.37	0.40				
Total	269	3.15	0.94				

Source: Field survey, 2023

The result of the analysis of variance as presented in Table 4 reveals that the calculated value of F was 20.833 and the observed probability value is 0.00 which is less than the fixed probability value of 0.05 (P<0.05). This indicates that the hypothesis which states that, there is no significant

difference in the mean responses of business education students on the extent to which entrepreneurship education influences entrepreneurial intention based on states was rejected ($F_{5,263}=20.833$; $P<0.05$). This implies that respondents based on states differ significantly in their responses regarding their perception of the influence of entrepreneurship education on entrepreneurial intention.

Table 5: Post Hoc Tests

(I) States	(J) States	Mean Difference (I-J)	Sig.
Adamawa	Taraba	.68671*	.001
	Yobe	.50908	.183
	Gombe	.20703	.930
	Bauchi	.71364*	.022
	Borno	1.41520*	.000
Taraba	Adamawa	-.68671*	.001
	Yobe	-.17763	.966
	Gombe	-.47968	.195
	Bauchi	.02693	1.000
	Borno	.72848*	.000
Yobe	Adamawa	-.50908	.183
	Taraba	.17763	.966
	Gombe	-.30205	.840
	Bauchi	.20456	.975
	Borno	.90611*	.000
Gombe	Adamawa	-.20703	.930
	Taraba	.47968	.195
	Yobe	.30205	.840
	Bauchi	.50661	.379
	Borno	1.20817*	.000
Bauchi	Adamawa	-.71364*	.022
	Taraba	-.02693	1.000
	Yobe	-.20456	.975
	Gombe	-.50661	.379
	Borno	.70155*	.025

Source: Field survey, 2023

Table 5: Continued Post-Hoc Tests

(I) States	(J) States	Mean Difference (I-J)	Sig.
Borno	Adamawa	-1.41520*	.000
	Taraba	-.72848*	.000
	Yobe	-.90611*	.000
	Gombe	-1.20817*	.000
	Bauchi	-.70155*	.025

Source: Field survey, 2023

Data in Table 5 shows the Schiffer Post Hoc test, which indicated the pairwise comparison of the mean responses of the respondents' responses based on states. The table reveals that significant difference lies between all the groups except for comparison between Adamawa and Yobe ($P=0.183$), Adamawa and Gombe ($P=0.930$), Taraba and Yobe ($P=0.966$), Taraba and Gombe ($P=0.195$), Taraba and Bauchi ($P=1.000$), Taraba and Adamawa ($P=0.183$), Yobe and Gombe ($P=.840$), Yobe and Bauchi ($P=.379$), Bauchi and Yobe ($P=.975$), Bauchi and Gombe ($P=.379$).

Discussion of Findings

The study was conducted to examine the influence of entrepreneurship education on entrepreneurial skill acquisition and entrepreneurial intention of business education students in tertiary institutions in the North-Eastern Zone, Nigeria.

Findings on research question one revealed that entrepreneurship education positively influences the technical skills of business education students to a high extent in North-Eastern, Nigeria. The result of hypothesis one revealed that there is a significant difference between the mean responses of male and female students regarding the influence of entrepreneurship education on the technical skills of business education students. This is because the technical skills of business education students are favourably influenced by entrepreneurship education programs. Therefore, responses show that male students assessed the influence of entrepreneurship education on technical skills higher than female students did, since female students' technical skills are less influenced by entrepreneurship education than male students', special attention needs to be paid to them. Entrepreneurship education provides learners with the necessary technical skills, as it provides them with the knowledge and mindset to take productive activities, innovate, and become entrepreneurs. According to Ezeji and Okorie (1988), technical skills are "knowledge and competency in a certain activity, particularly one that involves methods, processes, procedures, and techniques." The method of creating stimulators to improve the skills of various professions or activities in a business endeavour is known as technical skills.

Findings on research question two and hypothesis two revealed that entrepreneurship education positively influences the entrepreneurial intention of business education students to a high extent in North-Eastern, Nigeria. The result of hypothesis two revealed that respondents based on states differ significantly in their responses regarding the influence of entrepreneurship education on entrepreneurial intention by students of business education students in colleges of education and polytechnics. This indicates that respondents based on states differ significantly in their responses regarding their perception of the influence of entrepreneurship education on entrepreneurial intention. This is likely a reflection of the state-based variations in the resources provided by the administrations of colleges of education and polytechnics at entrepreneurship centres, which enhance the teaching of entrepreneurship education and encourage business education students to consider starting their businesses. The study confirms the report of Ajzen (2015), pedagogies that encourage learning by doing, by experience, by experiment, by risk-taking, by making mistakes, by problem-solving, by feedback through social interaction, by role-playing, by exploring role models, and by interaction with the instructors which are the most effective. This is in line with the report of Zain et al (2014) who affirm that entrepreneurial intention reflects an individual's state of mind targeted at new venture creation, development of new business models, and value addition within existing business models.

Conclusion

The study's findings make it clear that entrepreneurship education is essential for providing business education students with the technical skills that will enable them to create jobs rather than seek out employment. This requires different entrepreneurial skills and entrepreneurial intentions, all of which would contribute to the development and growth of the student's business. The entrepreneurial skills attributes were rated as the highest extent and the most important, as the study demonstrates that students in colleges of education and polytechnics have learned skills and knowledge of entrepreneurship education in the areas of competencies and traits as indicated. The study concluded that entrepreneurship education positively influences entrepreneurial skills and entrepreneurial intention as perceived by business education students in tertiary institutions. This demonstrates unequivocally how entrepreneurship education helps to reduce the high rate of unemployment among business education students and turns into a tool for generating employment chances.

The implication is that business education students need to acquire more than the core skills and characteristics that are stressed in entrepreneurship lectures. It is hinted that the students need to develop more than the fundamental abilities and traits that are frequently emphasized in

entrepreneurship training. Business education students need to be motivated to comprehend the value of different abilities and traits as a tool for promoting success as an entrepreneur. Therefore, entrepreneurship education must continue to be a priority in tertiary institutions to prepare graduates to create jobs rather than to seek employment; otherwise, graduates will continue to be unemployed and become involved in criminal activity due to inadequate knowledge and skills of entrepreneurship education in the Nigerian educational systems.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made.

1. Polytechnic administrators and colleges of education should push for the development of student's technical skills and competencies to prepare them for entrepreneurial endeavours. This can be achieved through an entrepreneurship education curriculum.
2. Authorities of colleges of education and polytechnics should set up facilities to improve the teaching of entrepreneurship education to guarantee that students receive the necessary instruction and reinforcement while they are in school and to change the perception of the students about their entrepreneurial intention.

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