

Roles of Business Education in Promoting Functional Entrepreneurial Practices for Graduates' Job Creation and Sustainable Economic Development in Delta State

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Abstract

The study examined the roles of business education in promoting functional entrepreneurship practices for graduates' job creation and sustainable economic development in Delta State. Two research questions guided the study. Two null hypotheses were tested. Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population comprised 99 business educators in the three colleges of education in Delta State. The entire population was studied without sampling due to its manageable size. A questionnaire structured on 4-point rating scale and contained 29-item statements was used to generate data. The instrument was validated by two experts. The reliability test was determined using Cronbach Alpha which yielded overall coefficient value of 0.79. The 99 copies of the instruments were administered to the respondents and 97 were successfully retrieved. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions while t-test was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. Findings revealed that more practical and less theory teaching of entrepreneurial-related courses; practical examination for students to include production of diverse products for entrepreneurial skills development, teaching students direct and online marketing practically among others are ways business education promotes functional entrepreneurial practices for graduates' job creation and sustainable economic development in Delta State. It was recommended among others that business educators should examine students on entrepreneurial skills acquisition based on practical experience and showcased during entrepreneurial product exhibition.

Keywords: *Business Education, Functional Entrepreneurial Practices, Graduates, Job Creation, Sustainable Economic Development*

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Background to the Study

Education is globally recognized as an instrument per excellence for the inculcation of knowledge, skills and values for capacity-building/empowerment of individual learners for meaningful sustainable economic development. Education system in Nigeria is structured to cover lower basic, upper basic, post basic and tertiary institutions. Tertiary institutions according to Federal Republic of Nigeria (2014) include universities, polytechnics, colleges of education and monotechnics. However, the study is interested in college of education as one of the tertiary institutions designed to prepare individuals to be leaders and practitioners in education and related human service fields by expanding and deepening understanding of education as a fundamental human endeavour in helping society define and respond to its educational responsibilities and challenges, as submitted by the Nigerian Academy of Management Administration (NAMA, 2014). Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 2013) stated that colleges of education would provide knowledge, skills and training to students for the production of teachers and skilled personnel who shall be enterprising and self-reliant. Business education is one of the courses that is taught in colleges of education in Nigeria.

Business education is seen as that aspect of vocational education that provides specialized instructions to recipients with knowledge, skills and attitudes for them to properly fit into employment opportunities in diverse settings. Aina (2019) described business education as a vital part of technical and vocational education and training programme (TVET) that is principally aimed at providing graduates with appropriate skills that will ensure versatility in their business endeavour while meeting the economic needs via work engagement. The philosophy of business education at the Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE) states that business education programme shall provide skills in new and emerging jobs and innovations to fit the world of work or self-reliant (NCCE, 2020). The programme prepares the individual for a career in teaching, employment in industries, civil service and business establishment as well as self-employment. Corroborating this, Badawia, Reyada, Khamisa, Hamdana and Alsartawia (2019) posited that the curriculum content of business education provides a theoretical framework beneficial for understanding business management and, at the same time, provides undergraduates with the knowledge, skills and techniques arguably indispensable to become successful entrepreneurs.

Entrepreneurship education is the type of education designed to change the orientation and attitude of the recipients and the process will equip them with the skills and knowledge to enable them start and manage a business (Paul-Mgbeafulike & Onyeneke, 2023). This is why the target of entrepreneurship education is to ensure that all tertiary education graduates are exposed to knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary for small scale business establishment and operations for self-sustenance, job creation and sustainable economic development of the nation. Hence, the introduction of entrepreneurship education in tertiary institutions was necessitated by the growing rate of unemployment in the country. Paul-Mgbeafulike and Onyeneke (2023) posits that with the skills acquired through entrepreneurship education, graduates of tertiary institutions can turn their education into productive business ventures thereby making them not only employable but also creating jobs for others on completion of training from entrepreneurship centres in tertiary institutions. College of education is one of

the entrepreneurship training centres of which business education is a training programme that offers entrepreneurial courses for the training and production of skillful and enterprising graduates. Thus, functional entrepreneurship practices are products of functional business education.

Functional education is that type of education that connects all study with specific needs and roles, towards which the beneficial interest is directed (Yehudah, 2023). Through this functional education, Olatunji, Omidiji and Ariba (2023) submitted that the recipient gains thinking habit and develops technical means which will help him solve his practical problems. Ali in Edokpolor and Muritala (2017) affirmed that functional education will ensure the availability of food for people, creation of jobs, provision of services among others. It could be deduced that functional education is practically-based for a desirable productive outcome. And business education programme is structured to promote functional entrepreneurship practices for graduates' job creation. In the submissions of Edokpolor and Muritala (2017), functional business education is a kind of education that emphasizes practice more than theory. It is a type of education that helps in producing skilled and competent graduates that would assist Nigerian economy in meeting her developmental needs through the provision of basic necessities such as, food, medicare, education, clothing and shelter as well as self-respect and independence. Thus, functional business education programme is structured majorly to inculcate in individuals, the necessary accounting skills, managerial skills, entrepreneurial skills, information technology skills, computing skills, digital skills, marketing skills, communication skills and pedagogical skills among others, required for creating and obtaining gainful employment.

Business education has significant roles in promoting functional entrepreneurship practices through its programme implementation. The curriculum of business education at the college of education level, shows that entrepreneurship education is well captured from inception of the 3-year programme (100 level through 300 level). The Academic Minimum Standards of the National Commission for Colleges of Education (Business Education) (2020) explicitly outlined business education courses to include: BED 117: Introduction to Entrepreneurship Education I; BED 127: Introduction to Entrepreneurship Education II (Year One, First and Second Semesters, with two contact hours of one-hour theory and one-hour practical teaching). BED 217: Theories of Entrepreneurship; BED 227: Entrepreneurship in Business Education I (Year Two, First and Second Semesters, with contact hours of two-hour theory followed by two-hour practice). While at the final year second semester, students offer Entrepreneurship in Business Education II, with two contact hours of practical teaching. In addition, the Academic Minimum Standards (NCCE, 2020) stated that there should be a functional School Business Centre (SBC) where entrepreneurship students will showcase their entrepreneurial products; marketing students will market those products; Office Technology and Management Education (OTME) students will provide photocopying and computer printing and related services, while accounting students will keep all accounting procedures and records of the SBC. Moreover, the mode of teaching business courses as captured in Academic Minimum Standards (NCCE, 2020), would be by lectures, tutorials, case studies, practical through mentoring programme, simulations, excursions and other

appropriate methods. Practical lessons in word processing, information communication technology and entrepreneurship education are compulsory. Also, for more practical experiences, it is mandatory for business education students to participate in industrial training and teaching practice exercise on areas of specialization before graduation. All these, are ways of ensuring that the students are adequately prepared for transition from school to world of work and more importantly, for self-reliant.

Iyioke and Ezeemma (2018) suggested effective strategies such as career education, real-world activities, effective collaboration with employers and job placement during SIWES are strategies for preparing students from school to work transition and decent work empowerment. Pech, Rehor and Slabova (2021) supported that expert involvement and business simulation methods of teaching are very effective in delivering entrepreneurial values and decent work empowerment of students. Okoli, Nwalado and Okolo (2023) asserted that business education programme provides entrepreneurial skills for its recipients that would enable them to start up small or medium scale enterprises (SMEs); production and manufacturing of goods and services in vocational trades. The authors further stated that mastering the skills in business education would position the students to be self-reliant, self-employed and job creators on graduation. This is one of the reasons why final year business education students at the college of education level, are mandated to develop and acquire skills on micro scale business plan writing, management and operations of small and medium business enterprises, products development, product marketing within the local environment, quality control in production, product designs and packaging, innovation and creativity, consumer behaviour during the pilot marketing activities, human resource management, communication, accounting records keeping and auditing in small business enterprises. The acquisition of these skills are further proved during “Institution's Students Entrepreneurship Products Exhibition” (NCCE, Minimum Standard, 2020). At graduation, the business education products are already fortified with skills adequate to succeed in diverse occupation areas, job creation and maximally contribute their quota to the sustainable economic development of the nation.

Consequently, haven passed through these academic exposures, it is expected that the NCE graduates of business education would have acquired the rudiments of functional entrepreneurship practices for job creation leading to sustainable economic development. Hence, entrepreneurial practices encompass a range of activities and behaviour undertaken by entrepreneur in the process of creating and developing new ventures. These practices involve hands-on engagement with business ideas, learning through social interactions and forming collaborations with other firms to drive innovation and learning. On the contrary, Edokpolor and Muritala (2017) lamented that despite the importance of business education on manpower and economic development, research findings have continued to show that business education students still graduate without vocational skills, which aggravated the increasing rates of unemployment and underemployment. On this, Adegoke (2017) urged governments to show commitment and political will in order to promote functional education through increased funding, policy making, supervision and monitoring of educational projects. The author made a passionate appeal to various supervisory agencies to play better

role as watchdog in ensuring that educational institutions operate within and abide by laid down academic standards. Also, governments should place special emphasis on provision of vocational training, modern infrastructure and closing the gap between tertiary education and industries by encouraging public-private-partnership.

However, business educators who teach entrepreneurial courses in colleges of education may vary in their rating of entrepreneurial practices for promoting graduates' job creation as a result of gender. Empirical evidence such as Okoli and Okolo (2023) states that gender significantly influenced business educators' rating of entrepreneurial skills needed for effective implementation of office education curriculum in colleges of education in South-South, Nigeria. Also, there is the likelihood that business educators in federal college of education and their counterparts in state college of education may differ in their ratings on challenges of functional entrepreneurship practices for graduates' job creation. Alao and Ile (2023) observed a significant difference between the opinions of federal and state business education undergraduates on innovative instructional strategies used by lecturers. Hence, the study on roles of business education in promoting functional entrepreneurial practices for graduates' job creation and sustainable economic development in Delta State.

Research Question

1. What ways do business education promote functional entrepreneurship practices for graduates' job creation and sustainable economic development in Delta State?
2. What are the challenges of functional entrepreneurship practices for graduates' job creation and sustainable economic development in Delta State?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

1. There is no significant difference between the ratings of male business educators and their female counterparts on ways business education promotes functional entrepreneurship practices for graduates' job creation and sustainable economic development in Delta State.
2. Business educators in federal college of education do not differ significantly from their counterparts in state college of education on challenges of functional entrepreneurship practices for graduates' job creation and sustainable economic development in Delta State.

Method

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The population of the study comprised 99 (50 males and 49 females) business educators in the three colleges of education in Delta State, namely: Federal College of Education (Technical), Asaba (79); College of Education, Warri (10) and College of Education, Mosogar (10). There was no sample as all the 99 business educators were used because of the manageable size. A questionnaire titled: Roles of Business Education in Promoting Functional Entrepreneurship Practices for Graduates' Job Creation and Sustainable Economic Development Questionnaire (RBEPFEPGJCSEDQ), having two sections 'A' and 'B'. Section 'A' contained information

on demographic variable of respondents and section 'B' contained 29- item question statements, structured on a 4-point rating scale and weighted as: Strongly Agreed (SA, 3.50-4.00), Agreed (A, 2.50-3.49), Disagreed (D, 1.50-2.49), Strongly Disagreed (SD, 1.00-1.49) was used for data collection. The instrument was validated by two experts in Business Education and Measurement and Evaluation Unit, Federal College of Education (Technical), Asaba. The reliability of the instrument was ascertained using split-half method. The data obtained was analyzed using Cronbach Alpha reliability test which yielded coefficient value of 0.89 indicating that the instrument is reliable. The researcher administered the instrument with the help of two research assistants. Out of the 99 copies of the questionnaire distributed to the respondents, 97 copies (representing 98 percent) were retrieved and used for data analysis. The data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions. T-test was used in testing the hypotheses. The decision was to reject the null hypothesis where the t-calculated is equal or greater than the table value; if otherwise, do not reject.

Results

Research Question 1: What ways do business education promote functional entrepreneurship practices for graduates' job creation and sustainable economic development in Delta State?

Table 1: Mean Responses on ways business education promotes functional entrepreneurship practices for graduates' job creation and sustainable economic development

N = 97				
S/N	Promoting Functional Entrepreneurship	X	SD	Remarks
1.	Engaging in more practical and less theory teaching of entrepreneurial-related courses.	3.67	0.64	SA
2.	Use of qualified and skillful business educators to teach entrepreneurship courses	3.83	0.42	SA
3.	Industrial training engagement of students strictly in their area of discipline/specialization.	3.63	0.71	SA
4.	Provision of teaching practice exercise for students to Improve their teaching skills for self-reliance.	3.61	0.74	SA
5.	Engagement in practical examination for students to include production of diverse products for entrepreneurial skills development	3.72	0.56	SA
6.	Teaching students direct and online marketing practically	3.80	0.51	SA
7.	Teaching product packaging and labeling practically	3.20	0.83	A
8.	Teaching students business management/discovering of business opportunities	3.65	0.70	SA
9.	Teaching students skills in financial, cost accounting and auditing	3.24	0.78	A
10.	Teaching students risk management in business enterprise	3.26	0.73	A
11.	Using e-commerce sites for teaching and learning purposes	3.69	0.57	SA
12.	Utilizing social media platforms (e.g. Facebook) for teaching advertising/promotion of goods and services	3.50	0.82	SA
13.	Annual exhibition of products produced by students with Price winning	3.67	0.64	SA
14.	Taking students on excursion/field trip to industries and business organizations for practical experience	3.61	0.74	SA
15.	Mentoring and tutorial guidance which cultivates entrepreneurial mindset in students	3.81	0.56	SA
16.	Practical teaching of business proposals, presentation and fund sourcing	3.36	0.68	A
17.	Practical teaching of portfolio development and investment issues.	3.23	0.62	A
18.	Practical teaching on methods of business communication	3.53	0.80	SA
19.	Use of model office and laboratories well equipped with modern technologies in teaching entrepreneurship	3.67	0.64	SA
20.	Adequate supply of materials and consumables for practical	3.64	0.66	SA
Cluster Mean/SD		3.57	0.67	Strongly Agreed

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 1 reveals 15 items with mean ratings ranging from 3.50 to 3.83, indicating strongly agreed. The remaining five items have mean scores ranging between 3.20 and 3.36, implying

agreement. With the cluster mean of 3.57, it implies that business education promotes functional entrepreneurship practices for graduates' job creation and sustainable economic development in Delta State. All the standard deviation values are within the same range, indicating that the respondents are not wide apart in their ratings.

Research Question 2: What are the challenges of functional entrepreneurship practices for graduates' job creation and sustainable economic development in Delta State?

Table 2: Mean Responses on challenges of functional entrepreneurship practices for graduates' job creation and sustainable economic development

N = 97				
S/N	Challenges of functional entrepreneurship practices	X	SD	Remarks
1.	Poor funding of entrepreneurial programme which by nature, is capital intensive	3.53	0.62	SA
2.	Inadequate time allocation for practical teaching on course time-table.	3.05	0.63	A
3.	Use of unqualified personnel in teaching entrepreneurship courses	3.87	0.52	SA
4.	Insufficient modern vocational training infrastructures, e.g. (model office, ICT laboratory).	3.69	0.50	SA
5.	Unstable power supply for functionality of relevant facilities	3.54	0.55	SA
6.	High cost of materials for hands-on practical on creative and innovative practice	3.69	0.57	SA
7.	High cost of transportation which affects cost of raw materials needed for production	3.37	0.76	A
8.	Lack of capital for business start-up	3.82	0.55	SA
9.	Unfavourable government policies such as multiple taxation, registration of business etc.	3.41	0.76	A
Cluster Mean/SD		3.55	0.61	Strongly Agreed

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 2 shows that items 21, 23 – 26 and 28 with mean scores ranging from 3.53 to 3.87 indicates strongly agreed. Items 22, 27 and 29 having mean scores ranging between 3.05 and 3.41 shows agreement. With the cluster mean of 3.55, it means that the respondents rated all the items as challenges of functional entrepreneurship practices for graduates' job creation and sustainable economic development in Delta State. The standard deviation values are within the same range, indicating homogeneity in respondents' ratings.

Testing of Hypotheses

Ho₁: There is no significant difference between the ratings of male business educators and their female counterparts on ways business education promotes functional entrepreneurship practices for graduates' job creation and sustainable economic development in Delta State.

Table 3: Summary of t-test analysis of the mean ratings of respondents on ways business education promotes functional entrepreneurship practices for graduates' job creation and sustainable economic development

Variables	N	Mean	SD	df	Alpha	t-Cal	t-Crit.	Decision
Male	49	3.22	0.27	95	0.05	-1.37	1.96	Not Rejected
Female	48	3.31	0.43					

Table 3 reveals that the calculated t-value of -1.37 is less than the critical t-value of 1.96 at 95 degree of freedom. This implies that the null hypothesis of no significant difference was accepted. It means that male and female business educators do not significantly differ in their mean ratings on ways business education promotes functional entrepreneurship practices for graduates' job creation and sustainable economic development in Delta State.

Ho₂: Business educators in federal college of education do not differ significantly from their counterparts in state college of education on challenges of functional entrepreneurship practices for graduates' job creation and sustainable economic development in Delta State.

Table 4: Summary of t-test analysis of the mean ratings of federal and state business educators on challenges of functional entrepreneurship practices for graduates' job creation and sustainable economic development

Institution	N	Mean	SD	df	Alpha	t-Cal	t-Crit.	Decision
Federal	78	3.49	0.53	95	0.05	0.33	1.96	Not Rejected
State	19	3.37	0.51					

Table 4 reveals that the calculated t-value of 0.33 is less than the critical t-value of 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance ($t_{cal} = 0.33 \leq t_{crit} = 1.96$). This implies that the hypothesis of no significant difference is accepted. It means that, there is no statistically significant difference between the opinions of business educators in federal college of education and their counterparts in state college of education on challenges of functional entrepreneurship practices for graduates' job creation and sustainable economic development in Delta State.

Discussion of Findings

The study in respect to research question one determined ways business education promotes functional entrepreneurship practices for graduates' job creation and sustainable economic development in Delta State. The study found that engagement of more practical and less theory teaching of entrepreneurial-related courses; use of qualified and skillful business educators to teach entrepreneurship courses; industrial training engagement of students strictly in their areas of discipline/specialization; engaging students on teaching practice

exercise to improve their teaching skills for self-reliance; practical examination of students to include production of diverse products for entrepreneurial skills development, teaching students direct and online marketing practically; teaching product packaging and labeling practically; annual exhibition of products produced by students with price winning; taking students on excursion/field trip to industries and business organizations for practical experience amongst others promotes functional entrepreneurship practices for graduates' job creation and sustainable economic development. The findings align with the submissions of Okoli, Nwalado and Okolo (2023) that business education programme provides entrepreneurial skills for its recipients that would enable them to start up small or medium scale enterprises (SMEs); production and manufacturing of goods and services in vocational trades.

The authors further stated that mastering the skills in business education would position the students to be self-reliant, self-employed and job creators on graduation. In agreement, Aina (2019), described business education as a vital part of technical and vocational education and training programme (TVET) that is principally aimed at providing graduates with appropriate skills that will ensure versatility in their business endeavour while meeting the economic needs via work engagement. Corroborating this, Badawia, Reyada, Khamisa, Hamdana and Alsartawia (2019) posited that the curriculum content of business education provides a theoretical framework beneficial for understanding business management and, at the same time, provides undergraduates with the knowledge, skills and techniques arguably indispensable to become successful entrepreneurs. Edokpolor and Muritala (2017), asserted that functional business education is a kind of education that emphasizes practice more than theory. It is a type of education that helps in producing skilled and competent graduates that would assist Nigerian economy in meeting her developmental needs through the provision of basic necessities such as, food, medicare, education, clothing and shelter as well as self-respect and independence. The results of findings clearly depicts that if the curriculum contents of business education are implemented in accordance with the Academic Minimum Standards (Business Education), (NCCE, 2020) and lending credence to Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 2013), that colleges of education would provide knowledge, skills and training to students for the production of teachers and skilled personnel who shall be enterprising and self-reliant, then, business education graduates would become successful practicing entrepreneurs, creating jobs and employing job seekers irrespective of the numerous challenges facing entrepreneurship in Nigeria. More so, the result of hypothesis showed that male and female business educators do not differ significantly in their ratings on ways business education promotes functional entrepreneurship practices for graduates' job creation and sustainable economic development in Delta State. The finding contradicts the report of Okoli and Okolo (2023) that gender significantly influenced business educators' rating of entrepreneurial skills needed for effective implementation of office education curriculum in colleges of education in South-South, Nigeria. The findings from the present study implies that male and female business educators agreed in totality that business education promotes functional entrepreneurial practices for graduates' job creation.

The study further indicates that poor funding of entrepreneurial programme; inadequate time allocation for practical teaching; use of unqualified personnel in teaching entrepreneurship courses; insufficient infrastructure; unstable electricity power supply; high cost of materials for hands-on practical on creative and innovative practice; high cost of transportation; lack of capital for business start-up and unfavourable government policies such as multiple taxation are some of the challenges of functional entrepreneurship practices for graduates' job creation and sustainable economic development. Adegoke (2017) reiterated by urging the governments to show commitment and political will in order to promote functional education through increased funding, policy making, supervision and monitoring of educational projects. The author made a passionate appeal to various supervisory agencies to play better role as watchdog in ensuring that educational institutions operate within and abide by laid down standard. Also, governments should place special emphasis on provision of vocational training, modern infrastructure and closing the gap between tertiary education and industries. The result of hypothesis two, finds no significant difference between the opinions of business educators in federal college of education and their counterparts in state college of education on the challenges of functional entrepreneurship practices for graduates' job creation and sustainable economic development in Delta State. This finding disagrees with that of Alao and Ile (2023) who reported that a statistically significant difference exists between the opinions of federal and state business education undergraduates on innovative instructional strategies used by lecturers to address the SDG 2030 of decent work in Nigeria. However, the implication of the present finding connotes that these challenges hindering functional entrepreneurship practices are common to all and sundry. Hence, a passionate call for the intervention of governments at all levels to show commitment in addressing and combating these challenges in a bid to enhance graduates' self-reliance.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that business education has significant roles of promoting functional entrepreneurship practices for graduates' job creation and sustainable economic development in Delta State, through adequate teaching of practical entrepreneurship by qualified and skillful business educators, exposure of students to industrial training in their areas of discipline, field trip and excursion to industries, annual product exhibition by students and so on. The challenges of poor funding of entrepreneurship programme; inadequate time allocation of course for practical teaching on time-table; use of unqualified personnel in teaching entrepreneurship courses; insufficient modern vocational infrastructures among others, should be addressed by management of colleges of education and the government to encourage entrepreneurship practices among business education graduates, for job creation and sustainable economic development in Delta State.

Recommendations

1. There should be conscious efforts by business educators to teach entrepreneurial courses strictly according to specifications of the current Academic Minimum Standards of the National Commission of Colleges of Education (NCCE), so as to prepare enterprising self-reliant graduates.
2. Management of Colleges of Education should strengthen their social and corporate

- responsibilities with Public Private Partnership, which open avenues for students' practical work experiences.
3. Business educators should examine students on entrepreneurship skills acquisition based on practical experience and showcased during entrepreneurial product exhibition.
 4. The federal government through its organ such as Tertiary Institution Trust Fund (TETFUND) should adequately fund business education programme with emphasis on entrepreneurial training materials, equipment and facilities.

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