

Digital Learning Platforms and Students' Entrepreneurial Competencies in Public Universities in Rivers State

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Abstract

The research examined Digital Learning Platforms and Students' Entrepreneurial Competencies at Public Universities within Rivers State. Two research topics and two hypotheses were formulated. The research employed a correlational design. The population comprised 8,780 students enrolled in public universities in Rivers State, including the University of Port Harcourt, Rivers State University, and Ignatius Ajuru University. The sample size of 383 respondents was calculated using the Taro Yamane formula. The stratified sample technique was employed to pick the respondents, consisting of 181 male and 202 female students. The data collection instrument comprised two self-structured questionnaires: the "Digital Learning Platforms Questionnaire (DLPO)" and the "Students' Entrepreneurial Competencies in Public Universities Questionnaire (SECPUQ)." The tool received validation from specialists in Measurement and Evaluation at Rivers State University. The instrument's reliability was assessed using the Cronbach Alpha technique. A cumulative reliability index of 0.80 and 0.83 was achieved. The data received from the respondents were evaluated using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient. Furthermore, t-transformation was employed to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The outcomes of the study found that, there is substantial association between Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) Platforms, Skill-Based Learning Platforms and Students' Entrepreneurial Competencies in Public Universities in Rivers State. Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended among others that, Governments and Public universities should embed the use of digital learning platforms such as Coursera, edX, and YouTube Learning into entrepreneurship courses to expose students to global entrepreneurial knowledge, case studies, and best practices.

Keywords: *Digital Learning Platforms, Entrepreneurial Competencies, Public Universities, Students. Rivers State.*

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Background to the Study

The rapid advancement of digital technology has transformed the landscape of higher education, especially in the way entrepreneurial skills are developed among students. Digital learning platforms have become essential tools for fostering students' entrepreneurial competencies, offering flexible, interactive, and personalized learning experiences (Okafor & George, 2023). In Rivers State, public universities have increasingly adopted Digital learning platforms to complement traditional classroom learning, aiming to prepare students not just for academic success but for real-world business” and entrepreneurial challenges. The integration of digital tools has democratized access to entrepreneurial knowledge and allowed students to engage with global markets from their classrooms.

Digital learning platforms refer to online-based systems or applications designed to facilitate and manage the delivery of educational content and interaction between instructors and learners. These platforms provide flexible, accessible, and interactive learning environments, enabling users to engage with multimedia resources, participate in discussions, take assessments, and track progress from any location with internet access (Nwachukwu & Kalu, 2022). Examples include Moodle, Google Classroom, Microsoft Teams, Canvas, and Coursera, which support blended and remote learning models in various educational settings. In the context of higher education, particularly in public universities in Rivers State, digital learning platforms have increasingly become essential tools for enhancing students' academic and practical competencies, including entrepreneurship, by promoting independent learning, digital literacy, and innovation (Onuoha & Ibiam, 2024). These platforms are not only transforming how knowledge is delivered but are also redefining the educational experience in ways that better prepare students for the 21st-century workforce. The types of Digital Learning Platforms that relates to Students' Entrepreneurial Competencies in Public Universities in Rivers State include; Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) Platforms and Skill-Based Learning Platforms. Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) platforms are digital learning environments that offer free or affordable access to a wide range of courses to a global audience, often with no restrictions on enrollment. MOOCs such as Coursera, edX, Udemy, and Future Learn provide learners with the opportunity to acquire knowledge and skills across various disciplines, including entrepreneurship, business management, technology, and innovation (Olanrewaju, 2022). In public universities in Rivers State, the adoption of MOOCs is increasingly becoming a strategic tool for supplementing traditional teaching methods, enabling students to develop entrepreneurial competencies such as critical thinking, innovation, business planning, and market analysis (Okafor & George, 2023). By participating in MOOC-based courses designed by leading universities and industry experts, students gain practical entrepreneurial insights that can enhance their ability to create and manage new ventures.

Moreover, MOOC platforms contribute significantly to shaping a more entrepreneurial mindset among students by offering real-world projects, virtual internships, and mentorship opportunities. Through MOOCs, students in Rivers State can access specialized entrepreneurial content that might not be readily available within their university curriculum, thereby broadening their perspectives and skill sets (Amadi & Odu, 2023). The flexibility of

MOOCs also allows students to learn at their own pace, balancing academic obligations with the pursuit of entrepreneurial knowledge. As global economic conditions increasingly demand entrepreneurial graduates, the integration of MOOCs into the learning ecosystem of public universities in Rivers State offers a promising pathway for building a self-reliant, innovative, and globally competitive student population.

Skill-based learning platforms are specialized digital platforms that focus on equipping learners with practical, job-ready skills relevant to various industries, including entrepreneurship, technology, finance, and creative sectors. Platforms such as LinkedIn Learning, Skillshare, and Udemy offer targeted courses that emphasize the acquisition of specific competencies like business plan development, digital marketing, financial literacy, project management, and innovation strategies. In public universities in Rivers State, the adoption of skill-based learning platforms provides students with a vital opportunity to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and real-world entrepreneurial practice (Nwachukwu & Kalu, 2022). Through structured modules, practical assignments, and certification programs, students gain the hands-on expertise necessary to ideate, launch, and sustain entrepreneurial ventures in the increasingly competitive and technology-driven economy.

Furthermore, skill-based learning platforms play a critical role in promoting entrepreneurial competencies such as problem-solving, critical thinking, leadership, negotiation, and creativity, which are essential for business success. These platforms are designed to be flexible and personalized, allowing students to learn at their own pace while engaging with global best practices and industry-relevant trends (Okeke & Ugochukwu, 2023). For students in Rivers State, access to such platforms not only enhances employability but also empowers them to become job creators rather than job seekers. As public universities seek to align their outputs with national and global development goals, integrating skill-based learning into students' academic journeys becomes indispensable for nurturing a generation of innovative and resilient entrepreneurs. Digital learning platforms promote competencies such as creativity, innovation, risk-taking, opportunity recognition, and critical thinking — all vital attributes for entrepreneurial success (Nwachukwu & Kalu, 2022). Through features like online business simulations, virtual mentoring, collaborative projects, and webinars with industry experts, students are exposed to the practical realities of entrepreneurship. In public universities in Rivers State, institutions such as the University of Port Harcourt and Rivers State University have embraced blended and online learning strategies to enhance students' entrepreneurial mindset and capability, addressing the increasing demand for graduates who can create jobs rather than merely seek them.

Students' entrepreneurial competencies in public universities refer to the set of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviors that empower students to identify opportunities, innovate, take calculated risks, and effectively manage business ventures. These competencies include creativity, critical thinking, problem-solving, resilience, leadership, financial literacy, and business management capabilities (Adeola & Evans, 2023). In public universities, particularly in Nigeria, there has been a growing emphasis on entrepreneurial education as a response to the rising unemployment rates and the need for economic self-sufficiency among graduates.

Universities aim to nurture these competencies by integrating entrepreneurship courses, experiential learning opportunities, internships, and digital learning platforms into their curricula (Okafor & Ude, 2022). By developing strong entrepreneurial competencies, students are better prepared not only to create their own businesses but also to bring innovative solutions to existing industries.

Moreover, entrepreneurial competencies are increasingly recognized as vital for national development and economic growth. In today's rapidly changing global economy, students equipped with entrepreneurial mindsets are more adaptable, proactive, and capable of leveraging emerging technologies to solve societal problems. In Rivers State's public universities, initiatives such as entrepreneurship centres, business incubation hubs, and online entrepreneurship programs are being established to build these competencies (Ibeawuchi & Onuoha, 2023). These competencies are not only essential for launching startups but are also transferable across multiple sectors, ensuring that students can thrive in various professional environments. As noted by Eze and Oboh (2023), fostering entrepreneurial competencies among university students contributes significantly to reducing graduate unemployment, promoting innovation, and enhancing national competitiveness. However, despite the numerous advantages offered by digital platforms, several challenges hinder their full potential in enhancing students' entrepreneurial competencies. Issues such as poor internet connectivity, limited digital literacy among both students and lecturers, and inadequate infrastructural support often slow down effective implementation (Amadi & Odu, 2023). Furthermore, a lack of localized entrepreneurial content tailored to the Nigerian economic context may limit the relevance of knowledge gained through these platforms. Addressing these barriers is critical for optimizing the role of digital learning technologies in shaping the entrepreneurial landscape among students in Rivers State. Thus, investigating the influence of digital learning platforms on students' entrepreneurial competencies becomes vital in informing educational policies and practices. In a rapidly changing global economy, ensuring that graduates are equipped with entrepreneurial competencies is essential for sustainable development, innovation, and job creation in Rivers State and Nigeria at large (Onuoha & Ibiam, 2024).

Statement of the Problem

In the 21st century, digital learning platforms have emerged as a transformative force in the delivery of education, offering flexible, accessible, and diversified learning opportunities. Public universities in Rivers State have increasingly adopted platforms such as Coursera, Udemy, LinkedIn Learning, and other Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) to complement traditional face-to-face teaching. Despite the promise these platforms hold for advancing entrepreneurial competencies among students, there remains a significant gap in understanding how effectively they contribute to nurturing entrepreneurial skills like creativity, innovation, risk-taking, and business management. Several students still graduate without the practical entrepreneurial competencies necessary to either start their ventures or adapt to the dynamic job market (Okoro & Nwachukwu, 2022). Consequently, questions arise as to whether digital learning platforms are being optimally utilized or aligned with the entrepreneurial development goals of public universities in Rivers State.

Furthermore, while digital learning environments offer numerous opportunities, challenges such as poor digital infrastructure, limited access to smart devices, inconsistent internet connectivity, and inadequate institutional support continue to impede the full realization of their benefits (Chukwuemeka & Aladejebi, 2023). Many students either lack the motivation to engage with digital entrepreneurship content independently or fail to translate online theoretical knowledge into practical entrepreneurial action. This situation points to a potential mismatch between the design of digital learning content and the entrepreneurial realities faced by students in Nigeria. Moreover, there is limited empirical research focused specifically on how the use of digital learning platforms enhances or inhibits the entrepreneurial competencies of students within public universities in Rivers State, highlighting a critical need for scholarly inquiry.

Given the urgent national emphasis on entrepreneurship as a solution to youth unemployment and economic diversification, it becomes crucial to investigate how digital learning platforms can be strategically leveraged to build entrepreneurial competencies among students (Odeh & Ekwueme, 2023). Without empirical insights into their influence, educational institutions risk investing in digital solutions that may not meet the developmental needs of their students. Thus, the researcher seeks to fill the existing knowledge gap by investigating; What is the relationship between digital learning platforms and students' entrepreneurial competencies in Public Universities in Rivers State? And to proffer solutions to the stated Problems.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to investigate Digital Learning Platforms and Students' Entrepreneurial Competencies in Public Universities in Rivers State. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Find out the relationship between Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) Platforms and Students' Entrepreneurial Competencies in Public Universities in Rivers State.
2. Ascertain the relationship between Skill-Based Learning Platforms and Students' Entrepreneurial Competencies in Public Universities in Rivers State.

Research Questions

The following research questions were asked to guide the study.

1. What is the relationship between Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) Platforms and Students' Entrepreneurial Competencies in Public Universities in Rivers State?
2. What is the relationship between Skill-Based Learning Platforms and Students' Entrepreneurial Competencies in Public Universities in Rivers State?

Hypothesis

The following hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

1. There is no significant relationship between Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) Platforms and Students' Entrepreneurial Competencies in Public Universities in Rivers State.
2. There is no significant relationship between Skill-Based Learning Platforms and Students' Entrepreneurial Competencies in Public Universities in Rivers State.

Methodology

The study used a correlational design. Rivers State's public universities, including the University of Port Harcourt, Rivers State University, and Ignatius Ajuru University, had a student population of 8,780. The Taro Yamen formula was used to calculate the sample size, which was 383 respondents. The respondents were chosen using a stratified sampling procedure, with 181 male and 202 female students participating. Data was collected using two self-structured questionnaires: the "Digital Learning Platforms Questionnaire (DLPQ)" and the "Students' Entrepreneurial Competencies in Public Universities Questionnaire (SECPUQ)". Each part was used to collect information on the objectives, which were designed in the form of a four-point rating scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD), with numerical values of 4, 3, 2, and 1, respectively. The study instrument was validated using face and content validity. This was done by two specialists from Rivers State University's Department of Educational Management. The instrument's reliability was established using the Cronbach Alpha Reliability Coefficient approach. The instrument's Cronbach Alpha index was between 0.80 and 0.83, indicating dependability. The researcher distributed the questionnaire to the respondents with the assistance of two trained research assistants. All copies of the instrument were administered and recovered satisfactorily. The data collected from respondents was evaluated using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient. Furthermore, the t-transformation was employed to test the null hypotheses at a significance threshold of 0.05. T-cal values less than the table value (1.96) were considered "accepted", whereas calculated hypotheses greater than the table value were considered "rejected".

Results

Research Question 1: What is the relationship between Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) Platforms and Students' Entrepreneurial Competencies in Public Universities in Rivers State?

Table 1: Relationship between Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) Platforms and Students' Entrepreneurial Competencies in Public Universities in Rivers State

	N	$\sum X$ $\sum Y$	$\sum X^2$ $\sum Y^2$	$\sum XY$	r-cal	Remark
Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) Platforms	383	1883	60305	67935	0.91	High and Positive Relationship
Students' Entrepreneurial Competencies	383	1822	66299			

Source: Research Data, 2025

The relationship between Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) platforms and students' entrepreneurial competencies at Rivers State's public universities is displayed in Table 1. According to the data, there is a 0.91 relationship between students' entrepreneurial competencies in public universities in Rivers State and Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) platforms. This indicates that there is a strong and favorable correlation between students' entrepreneurial competencies at Rivers State's public universities and Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) platforms. It means that, MOOC platforms expose students to a wide range of global entrepreneurial strategies, case studies, and business models, helping them acquire up-to-date knowledge needed to thrive in a competitive business environment. Through specialized courses on topics like business management, marketing, finance, and innovation, MOOCs equip students with practical entrepreneurial skills essential for starting and sustaining businesses. Many MOOC courses are structured around real-world problems and projects, which enhances students' critical thinking, problem-solving skills, and decision-making abilities critical for entrepreneurial success. Using MOOC platforms teaches students how to navigate digital tools and resources, thereby improving their technological proficiency — a crucial competency for modern entrepreneurs. MOOCs encourage independent learning and responsibility, which are key traits for entrepreneurs who must often identify opportunities and act on them without external prompting

Research Question 2: What is the relationship between Skill-Based Learning Platforms and Students' Entrepreneurial Competencies in Public Universities in Rivers State?

Table 2: Relationship between Skill-Based Learning Platforms and Students' Entrepreneurial Competencies in Public Universities in Rivers State Variables r- cal Remark

	N	$\sum X$ $\sum Y$	$\sum X^2$ $\sum Y^2$	$\sum XY$		
	383	1872	64819			
Skill-Based Learning Platforms.				69556	0.80	High and Positive Relationship
Students' Entrepreneurial Competencies.	383	1884	66298			

Source: Research Data, 2025

The relationship between students' entrepreneurial competencies in Rivers State's public universities and skill-based learning platforms is displayed in Table 2. According to Pearson product moment correlation study, there is a 0.80 correlation between students' entrepreneurial competencies in Rivers State's public universities and skill-based learning platforms. The discovered correlation coefficient shows that students' entrepreneurial competencies in Rivers State's public universities are positively correlated with skill-based

learning platforms. This means that, Skill-based learning platforms offer hands-on training in essential areas such as marketing, financial literacy, business planning, and product development, helping students build the core competencies needed for entrepreneurship. These platforms provide targeted courses in industries like tech, agriculture, fashion, and digital marketing, enabling students to gain specialized skills that are critical for creating niche businesses. Through interactive projects, workshops, and simulations, students are encouraged to think creatively and develop innovative solutions, which are vital qualities for successful entrepreneurs. Skill-based platforms teach management principles, leadership strategies, and operational efficiency, equipping students with the ability to effectively run and scale their businesses. Students engage in problem-solving exercises that improve their ability to think critically, assess risks, and devise practical business solutions, essential for entrepreneurial decision-making.

Hypotheses Test

H01: There is no significant relationship between Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) Platforms and Students' Entrepreneurial Competencies in Public Universities in Rivers State.

Table 3: t-transformation of the Relationship between Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) Platforms and Students' Entrepreneurial Competencies in Public Universities in Rivers State

Variables	N	r-cal	α	t-cal	t-crit	Remark
Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) Platforms	383	0.91	0.05	19.73	1.96	Rejected
Students' Entrepreneurial Competencies	383					

Source: Research Data, 2025

The t-transformation of the association between students' entrepreneurial competencies at Rivers State's public universities and Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) platforms is displayed in Table 3. After applying t-transformation to the r-calculated value of 0.91, a t-cal value of 19.73 was obtained. The null hypothesis was rejected since the t-calculated value was greater than the t-critical value (1.96). In other words, there is a strong correlation between students' entrepreneurial competencies at Rivers State's public universities and Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) platforms.

H02: There is no significant relationship between Skill-Based Learning Platforms and Students' Entrepreneurial Competencies in Public Universities in Rivers State.

Table 4: t-transformation of the Relationship between Skill-Based Learning Platforms and Students' Entrepreneurial Competencies in Public Universities in Rivers State

Variables	N	r-cal	A	t-cal	t-crit	Remark
Skill-Based Learning Platforms	383	0.77	0.05	11.31	1.96	Rejected
Students' Entrepreneurial Competencies	383					

Source: Research Data, 2025

The t-transformation of the relationship between students' entrepreneurial competencies and skill-based learning platforms in Rivers State's public universities is displayed in Table 4. After applying t-transformation on the estimated value of 0.77, a t-cal value of 11.09 was obtained. The null hypothesis was rejected since the t-calculated value was greater than the t-critical value (1.96). In other words, students' entrepreneurial competencies at Rivers State's public universities are significantly correlated with skill-based learning platforms.

Discussion of Findings

The magnitude of the association between Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) platforms and students' entrepreneurial competencies in Rivers State's public universities is displayed in Table 1. The two variables were shown to have a strong positive association, with a correlation coefficient of 0.91. The hypothesis revealed a strong correlation between students' entrepreneurial competencies at Rivers State's public universities and Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) platforms. This result supports the theory put forth by Olanrewaju (2022) that Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) platforms provide a global audience with free or inexpensive access to a variety of courses, frequently with no enrollment limitations. MOOCs like Coursera, edX, Udemy, and FutureLearn give students the chance to learn in a variety of fields, such as technology, innovation, entrepreneurship, and business management. Also, Amadi and Odu (2023) maintained that, Moreover, MOOC platforms contribute significantly to shaping a more entrepreneurial mindset among students by offering real-world projects, virtual internships, and mentorship opportunities. Through MOOCs, students in Rivers State can access specialized entrepreneurial content that might not be readily available within their university curriculum, thereby broadening their perspectives and skill sets.

Secondly, the findings from table 2 shows that the relationship between Skill-Based Learning Platforms and Students' Entrepreneurial Competencies in Public Universities in Rivers State. The Pearson Product Moment association Analysis demonstrated that there is a strong relationship between Skill-Based Learning Platforms and Students' Entrepreneurial Competencies in Public Universities in Rivers State. The tested hypothesis shows that the relationship existing between the two variables are significant at 0.05 alpha level. In relation to this finding, Nwachukwu and Kalu (2022) posited that, the adoption of skill-based learning

platforms provides students with a vital opportunity to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and real-world entrepreneurial practice. Through structured modules, practical assignments, and certification programs, students gain the hands-on expertise necessary to ideate, launch, and sustain entrepreneurial ventures in the increasingly competitive and technology-driven economy. Also, Okeke and Ugochukwu (2023) explained that, skill-based learning platforms play a critical role in promoting entrepreneurial competencies such as problem-solving, critical thinking, leadership, negotiation, and creativity, which are essential for business success. These platforms are designed to be flexible and personalized, allowing students to learn at their own pace while engaging with global best practices and industry-relevant trends.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study researcher concludes that, there is significant relationship between Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) Platforms, Skill-Based Learning Platforms and Students' Entrepreneurial Competencies in Public Universities in Rivers State. The integration of digital learning platforms at public institutions in Rivers State has provided new avenues for increasing students' entrepreneurial competencies. Through access to Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), skill-based platforms, and other online educational resources, students are more exposed to practical, innovative, and globally competitive entrepreneurial expertise.

These platforms offer flexibility, personalized learning experiences, and the opportunity to acquire critical 21st-century skills such as creativity, problem-solving, financial literacy, and digital marketing. However, despite their potential, several systemic challenges—such as digital illiteracy, poor infrastructure, and low motivation levels among students—continue to hinder the optimal impact of these technologies. As such, it becomes clear that while digital platforms offer immense promise, their strategic integration, institutional support, and alignment with local entrepreneurial realities are crucial to truly fostering entrepreneurial competencies among students.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made for the study, that:

1. Public Universities in Rivers State should formally integrate digital entrepreneurship courses into their academic curriculum. These courses should focus on utilizing digital platforms such as MOOCs, Coursera, LinkedIn Learning, and others to expose students to global entrepreneurial trends, digital business models, and innovative thinking. Tailoring these courses to address both theoretical knowledge and practical skills will help bridge the gap between digital learning and real-world entrepreneurial activities.
2. Universities must prioritize the provision of stable internet connectivity, well-equipped digital learning centers, and access to modern technological tools. Without reliable infrastructure, students may be discouraged from utilizing online learning platforms effectively. Investing in strong ICT facilities and ensuring regular maintenance would create an enabling environment where students can fully engage with digital entrepreneurial resources.

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