

MANAGEMENT OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION AS A PREDICTOR OF STUDENTS' ENTREPRENEURIAL INTENTIONS AND SKILLS ACQUISITION IN UNIVERSITIES IN SOUTH-SOUTH NIGERIA

Uche Calista, Vita-Agundu

Department of Educational Foundations

Faculty of Education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka

Abstract

This study investigated the management of entrepreneurship education as a predictor of students' entrepreneurial intentions and skills acquisition in universities in south-south Nigeria. Two hypotheses guided the study. A correlational survey design was adopted. The population comprised 2,097 final-year undergraduate students from six federal universities in South-South Nigeria. A purposive sampling was used in selecting 600 students (100 per university, equally distributed by gender). Data were collected using three validated instruments: the Management of Entrepreneurship Education Scale (MEES), Skills Acquisition Scale (SAS), and Entrepreneurial Intentions Scale (EIS). Reliability was established using Cronbach's Alpha, yielding coefficients between 0.81 and 0.84. Data collection was conducted by the researchers and 15 trained assistants following institutional approval. Responses were scored on a 4-point Likert scale. The hypotheses were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation and multiple linear regression in SPSS v26 at a 0.05 significance level. Findings revealed a statistically significant relationship between entrepreneurship education management, skills acquisition, and entrepreneurial intentions among university students. This underscores the vital role of structured entrepreneurship education in equipping students with essential skills for self-employment. In a depressed economy, strengthening entrepreneurship education can foster economic recovery by reducing unemployment and promoting innovation. The study recommends that, the government in collaboration with institutional administrators should enhance the management of entrepreneurship education programs by ensuring adequate funding, proper curriculum implementation, and continuous teacher training. This will enable students to acquire practical entrepreneurial skills that promote self-employment and job creation, thus contributing to economic growth.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship education, management, skills acquisition, depressed economy,

Introduction

Facing massive youth employment challenges and a shifting labor market, developing student entrepreneurial intentions has gained significant policy attention in Nigeria. A university is a higher education institution dedicated to creating, disseminating, and applying knowledge, as well as providing quality education, fostering critical thinking, conducting research, promoting innovation, and preparing students for both professional and societal contributions. In Nigeria, unemployment remains a pressing issue, with a significant portion of the unemployed being graduates of tertiary institutions (Obona, Alorye, & Akor, 2023). It is essential for universities to place greater emphasis on preparing students for professional success and societal impact by equipping them with industry-relevant skills, critical thinking abilities, ethical values, and entrepreneurial intentions. This approach will enable graduates to excel in their careers, by driving innovation, and making meaningful contributions to the economy.

Skilled entrepreneurs are drivers of the economy of every nation since they contribute to foreign exchange earnings by developing exportable goods and services, as

well as strengthening national economies. When graduates acquire entrepreneurial skills, develop intentions required for long-term career pursuits. This may include establishing businesses, marketing services, being productive, creating wealth, providing employment, and becoming self-sufficient, thus contributing to national development (Nwoye, in Madukwe, Nwannunu, Obona, & Obioma, 2024). Thus, by nurturing a culture of skills development and entrepreneurship, universities can help transform students into job creators, driving economic revival even in the face of adversity. Madukwe et al. (2024) defined skill acquisition as the process of acquiring and enhancing specific abilities, typically through practice and experience. In a developing country like Nigeria with limited job opportunities, skills acquisition will empower graduates to create their own businesses, generating employment and reduce dependency on government and corporate jobs.

Acquisition of entrepreneurship skills can foster innovation, local production, and self-sufficiency, thereby stimulating economic activity and reducing poverty. Hisrich, Peters, and Shepherd (2020) refer to entrepreneurial skills as the competencies and abilities required to identify opportunities, take risks, innovate, and effectively manage business ventures. These skills include creativity, leadership, problem-solving, financial management, resilience, and decision-making, all of which contribute to business success. According to Kuratko (2019), entrepreneurial skills encompass both technical and soft skills necessary for business creation, sustainability, and growth. Additionally, Baron and Tang (2018) emphasize that entrepreneurial skills involve adaptability and strategic thinking, allowing entrepreneurs to navigate uncertain business environments successfully. Entrepreneurial intention is crucial in boosting job creation and promoting economic growth by cultivating a mindset centered on innovation, business creation, and self-employment. It is regarded as the strongest predictor of entrepreneurial behavior (Romero-Galisteo, onzález-Sánchez, Gálvez-Ruiz, Palomo-Carrión, & Casuso-Holgado, 2022). When students are taught and motivated to launch their own businesses, they not only generate employment for themselves but also help stimulate the economy by creating job opportunities for others, launch new products and services, as well as encourage competition. This entrepreneurial spirit can lead to the emergence of new industries, decreased unemployment, and sustainable economic development for the nation. Entrepreneurship is a personal attitude that involves the drive for growth through innovative actions and the ability to identify opportunities in the environment (Calabuig, in Romero-Galisteo et al., 2022).

However, being an entrepreneur requires both creating and diversifying, as well as intervening in existing organizational processes (Ratten & Tajeddini, 2019). Furthermore, entrepreneurship is a complex activity that integrates cognitive, personal, social, economic, political, and cultural factors, making it a multidisciplinary phenomenon (Romero-Galisteo et al., 2022). In this study, entrepreneurial intentions referred to the mindset, drive, and goals of university students regarding the establishment and management of their own businesses. It includes their decision-making process and the degree of dedication to engaging in entrepreneurial endeavors, such as launching new businesses, introducing innovative products or services, and fostering economic growth through self-employment. These intentions signify the students' willingness to participate in entrepreneurial activities, which can contribute to job creation and overall economic advancement.

One major global challenge today is the rising unemployment rate, with Nigeria being one of the countries that produce a large number of graduates annually without

adequate job opportunities to accommodate them (Obona et al., 2023). The lack of employable skills among graduates is a key factor in this issue (Alabi, Alanana, & Bahal, 2014). Ifeluni (2015) argues that addressing globalization challenges, unemployment, and the need for a functional education system requires equipping graduates with competitive skills. Studies have shown that Nigeria's education system places excessive emphasis on academic subjects without linking them to practical problem-solving, thereby reinforcing the "white-collar job syndrome" and worsening graduate unemployment (Odike, Okolo, & Otoh, 2023; Akhuemonkhan, Raimi, & Sofoluwe, 2013). In Nigeria, unemployment according to Odike et al. (2023) has worsened in recent years. Furthermore, Eton and Omorobi (2021) report that over 65% of graduates lack the right mindset to navigate the labor market, while Ojeifo (2013) notes that most graduates focus solely on white-collar jobs with minimal entrepreneurial skills. This has caused many graduates to remain unemployed for years, with some resorting to negative social activities (Liolio, in Andow, 2020).

Combating this unemployment in Nigeria requires a critical assessment of its contributing factors, particularly the lack of essential skills among university students for job creation. Both the Federal and State governments perceive tertiary education as a crucial investment in human capital development, aimed at producing skilled professionals for managerial and technocratic roles in the economy (Obona, Edim, & Edim., 2020). Moreso, stakeholders consider tertiary education a powerful tool for addressing social vices and economic challenges, such as unemployment and economic stagnation. In a struggling economy characterized by high unemployment, inflation, and slow growth, there is need for integration of entrepreneurship education into the school curriculum to reduce graduate unemployment, foster economic development, and promote problem-solving and creativity across various fields. This recognition led to the integration of entrepreneurship education into university curricula to equip students with the necessary knowledge, skills, and mindset for self-employment, innovation, and business creation. Oboreh and Nnebe (2019) define entrepreneurship education as an orientation that fosters the ability to identify and recognize opportunities. This suggests that entrepreneurship education is designed to help students develop positive attitudes, creativity, and self-reliance rather than relying solely on government employment. Supporting this view, Emeraton, in Oboreh and Nnebe (2019), asserts that entrepreneurship education aims to cultivate entrepreneurial skills, attitudes, and competencies that enable individuals to successfully manage businesses and contribute to economic growth. This aligns with the core mandate of university education in Nigeria. To achieve these objectives, effective management of entrepreneurship education is essential.

Management of entrepreneurship education involves designing relevant curricula, ensuring adequate resource allocation, engaging qualified instructors, and fostering industry collaborations. According to Obona et al. (2020), management also entails the judicious utilization of available resources to achieve predefined goals. Additionally, structured monitoring and evaluation mechanisms are crucial for assessing program impact, refining teaching strategies, and ensuring alignment with labor market demands. Without proper management, entrepreneurship education may fall short of its intended outcomes, leading to ineffective implementation and limited practical benefits for students. Given the critical role of entrepreneurship in addressing social vices and economic challenges such as unemployment and stagnation, it is important to investigate how the management of entrepreneurship education influences skills acquisition and the entrepreneurial intentions of university students, particularly in the context of a depressed economy. This study investigated entrepreneurship education management as correlate of

skills acquisition and entrepreneurial intentions among university students, highlighting its broader economic implications.

This study is based on the Cognitive Approach Theory, propounded by Taylor (1998), which posits that individuals lack perfect knowledge of the world due to the overwhelming amount of available information. As a result, they selectively interpret information based on prior experiences, shaping their understanding of the world. The theory emphasizes that entrepreneurial behavior emerges from the interaction between individual skills, environmental opportunities, and social support. When these elements align, individuals are more likely to develop entrepreneurial competencies and succeed in business ventures. Cognitive theory highlights the role of social and environmental factors in fostering entrepreneurship. It suggests that individuals activate their entrepreneurial potential when provided with the right opportunities and support. Entrepreneurship education plays a critical role in this process by equipping individuals with the necessary skills to navigate business environments successfully. Instead of solely focusing on the entrepreneur's personality traits, the theory shifts attention to situational factors that influence entrepreneurial behavior. Applying this theory to entrepreneurship education, it becomes evident that effective management of such programs enhances students' entrepreneurial potential. Properly managed entrepreneurship education not only prepares students for employment but also empowers them to create their own businesses. Behavioral patterns are shaped by two key psychological processes: selection of environments and influence of experiences. Individuals with entrepreneurial tendencies are more likely to engage in business activities when exposed to a favorable socialization process that reinforces entrepreneurship as a viable career path. The implication of this theory is that entrepreneurial success is driven by a combination of individual abilities, environmental possibilities, and social support. Therefore, by ensuring the effective management of entrepreneurship education, universities can nurture students' entrepreneurial mindset, enabling them to contribute meaningfully to economic growth and self-reliance.

Literature review

Properly managed entrepreneurship education fosters innovation, equipping students with the skills necessary to transition seamlessly into the workforce or establishes their own businesses. Consequently, this contributes to reducing unemployment and driving economic growth. The effective management of entrepreneurship programmes plays a crucial role in student empowerment, reducing unemployment, poverty, and social vices (Sule, 2013). This process requires systematic planning, organization, and supervision of both human and material resources to achieve desired objectives (Omorobi, 2018; Omorobi & Edut, 2019). Skill refers to the speed, expertise, dexterity, and proficiency demonstrated through continuous mental and manual practice in performing a task with precision and accuracy (Oboreh & Nnebe, 2019; Etonyeaku, 2008). Entrepreneurial skills acquisition refers to the set of competencies an individual acquires to become a successful entrepreneur. These skills are essential for effectively managing a business or adding value to an organization. According to Agu et al. (2013), skills must be nurtured through proper education to ensure they are applied to productive and responsible small business ventures that benefit both individuals and their communities. Furthermore, entrepreneurial skills acquisition can also be defined as the abilities an individual must possess to succeed in a virtual learning environment. Empirical studies have consistently highlighted the significance of entrepreneurship education in fostering skill development. Jiddah (2016) examined the impact of entrepreneurship education on graduates' business start-ups in North Central Nigeria. The study employed a descriptive survey research

design and sampled graduates using Yaro Yamane's sampling formula. A structured questionnaire, which included general entrepreneurship education and business start-up assessments, was used to collect data. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, and logistic regression was employed to test two hypotheses. The findings revealed that entrepreneurial career aspirations significantly influence graduates' ability to start businesses.

Similarly, Onuma (2016) investigated the role of entrepreneurial education in enhancing post-graduation job creation. The study targeted final-year students in the Educational Administration department at Ebonyi State University during the 2013/2014 academic year, with a total population of 200 respondents. The entire population served as the sample size. A structured questionnaire was developed and validated by experts in Educational Administration, Measurement, and Evaluation. Reliability testing yielded a coefficient of 0.79. Data analysis was conducted using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (r) statistics and a population t -test at a 0.05 alpha level. The findings established a significant relationship in the three tested hypotheses, implying that entrepreneurial education is essential for equipping students with job creation skills rather than making them dependent job seekers. Additionally, Akpotohwo et al. (2016) examined the entrepreneurial skills required by business education students for self-sustainability in Bayelsa State. The study adopted a descriptive survey design and was conducted at Niger Delta University, Bayelsa State. The population comprised 450 business education students from the Department of Vocational and Technology Education, out of which a randomly selected sample of 180 students participated in the study. The findings concluded that entrepreneurial skills are crucial for effective business operations and self-sustainability. In another study, Oboreh and Nnebe (2019) investigated the impact of entrepreneurship education on skill acquisition among graduates of public universities in South-East Nigeria. The study employed a descriptive research design and relied on primary data sources. The target population comprised 7,951 individuals, with a sample size representing 10% of students from eight universities. Data collection was conducted using a structured questionnaire based on a five-point Likert scale. The instrument's validity was ensured through face and content validation, while its reliability was assessed using the test-retest method and Cronbach's alpha. Data analysis was performed using Multiple Regression analysis. The findings revealed that entrepreneurship education had a significant positive effect on graduates' skill acquisition in public universities in South-East Nigeria.

Entrepreneurship education plays a crucial role in enhancing the competitiveness of both nations and industries. It creates opportunities for developing a more competitive educational environment (Wang & Ortiz, 2022). Researchers around the world are interested in investigating the determinants of students' entrepreneurial intentions (Razzaq et al., 2020; Khan et al., 2021; Fang et al., 2022). Indeed, a number of studies have shown that exposure to entrepreneurship education can significantly influence a person's entrepreneurial aspirations. Chukwuma and Ogbeide (2017) conducted a study to assess the impact of entrepreneurial education on undergraduate students' entrepreneurial intentions. Employing a descriptive research design, data were collected from a sample of 166 participants. The analysis, carried out using inferential statistics (Chi-square " X^2 "), indicated that exposure to entrepreneurial education positively influenced students' entrepreneurial intentions. Specifically, the study found that the development of entrepreneurial skills and knowledge fostered students' aspirations to become self-employed in the future. Wale-Oshinowo and Kuye (2016) explored the impact of entrepreneurship education on students' beliefs, knowledge, and entrepreneurial intentions

at a leading federal polytechnic in Lagos, Nigeria. The study focused on final-year students enrolled in the Ordinary National Diploma (OND) and Higher National Diploma (HND) programs. Using a simple random sampling method, primary data were gathered from 150 students (75 OND and 75 HND) across seven schools within the institution. A structured questionnaire served as the data collection instrument, while descriptive statistics and regression analysis were employed to test the study's hypotheses. The results indicated a significant positive relationship between entrepreneurship education and the two dependent variables: entrepreneurial knowledge and intention. Furthermore, entrepreneurial knowledge was found to have a strong positive correlation with students' entrepreneurial intentions.

In a study conducted by Mei et al. (2020) examined the state of entrepreneurship education in Chinese higher education institutions and its impact on students' entrepreneurial intentions. Their study, based on survey data from Chinese students, revealed that engagement in entrepreneurship education varied across different institution types and academic disciplines. The findings indicated that students who received higher levels of entrepreneurship education exhibited greater confidence in their entrepreneurial decision-making abilities, which, in turn, strengthened their entrepreneurial intentions. Wang and Ortiz (2022) investigated the impact of entrepreneurship education on students' entrepreneurial intentions in China. Their study proposed a model incorporating perceived entrepreneurial capacity, entrepreneurship education, and attitudes toward entrepreneurship as key factors influencing entrepreneurial intention. Using structural equation modeling (SEM), they analyzed data from 98 management students across various Chinese universities. The results revealed a statistically significant and positive relationship between entrepreneurship learning, entrepreneurial attitudes, entrepreneurship education, and students' entrepreneurial intentions. Existing research underscores the importance of entrepreneurship education in equipping students with essential skills for business success. These studies highlight the role of entrepreneurial skills in fostering self-reliance, job creation, and economic development. However, no studies specifically have been found to focus on management of entrepreneurship education as correlate of skills acquisition and entrepreneurial intentions among students in federal universities in South-South Nigeria. Therefore, this study is conducted to fill this gap and to contribute new insights to the existing body of knowledge.

Statement of the problem

One of the primary goals of university education, which aligns with both individual intellectual development and societal progress, is to equip students with essential technical, professional, and entrepreneurial skills necessary for employment, self-sufficiency, and economic growth. Graduates with entrepreneurial skills and aspirations typically demonstrate creativity and problem-solving abilities, enabling them to identify opportunities and develop innovative solutions. They exhibit critical thinking, adaptability, and the ability to leverage technology for business growth. Furthermore, they possess strong business knowledge and are willing to take calculated risks, which enhances their ability to establish and sustain businesses. Their resilience in facing challenges and their pursuit of opportunities reflect their entrepreneurial mindset and long-term vision for success. Despite these objectives, researchers have noted a continuous rise in graduate unemployment. The increasing number of graduates has far outpaced available job opportunities, forcing many into illicit activities such as drug abuse, prostitution, and other illegal means of survival instead of creating employment for themselves and others. This

issue has become a significant concern for stakeholders, especially as challenges such as poverty, insecurity, and youth-related crimes continue to hinder national economic growth. These concerns raise critical questions about whether students genuinely acquire entrepreneurial skills during their studies. Some argue that a lack of adequate training leaves graduates either unemployable or incapable of achieving self-reliance. Consequently, many struggle to sustain themselves through legitimate means, worsening the economic challenges faced by both the state and the nation. The researcher believes that the root of this problem may be linked to the management of entrepreneurship education programs within universities. This concern leads to the study's central question: How does the management of entrepreneurship education influence skills acquisition and entrepreneurial intentions among university students? The quest for answer to this question has prompted this study.

Purpose of the study

The aim of study was to investigate management of entrepreneurship education as a predictor of students' entrepreneurial intentions and skills acquisition in universities in south-south Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Determine the predictive power of entrepreneurship education management on skills acquisition among students in federal universities in South-South, Nigeria.
2. Examine the predictive power of entrepreneurship education management on students' entrepreneurial intentions in federal universities in South-South, Nigeria.

Hypotheses

The following research hypotheses guided the study:

- H₀₁:** There is no predictive power of entrepreneurship education management on skills acquisition among students in federal universities in South-South, Nigeria.
- H₀₂:** Management of entrepreneurship education does not any significant predictive power on students' entrepreneurial intentions in federal universities in South-South, Nigeria.

Methods

The study employed a correlational survey design to examine the relationships between variables without manipulation. It focused on all six federal universities in the South-South geopolitical zone of Nigeria, with a total population of 2,097 final-year undergraduate students from the University of Benin (UNIBEN), University of Port Harcourt (UNIPORT), University of Calabar (UNICAL), Federal University of Petroleum Resources, Effurun (FUPRE), Federal University, Otuoke (FUO), and Niger Delta University (NDU). A stratified and purposive sampling technique was adopted for the study. First, stratified sampling was used to group the population according to the six federal universities. Then, purposive sampling was employed to select a total of 600 final-year students—100 students from each university—with equal gender distribution (i.e., 50 males and 50 females per institution), to ensure representativeness and gender balance in the sample. Data were collected using three instruments: the *Management of Entrepreneurship Education Scale (MEES)*, *Skills Acquisition Scale (SAS)*, and *Entrepreneurial Intentions Scale (EIS)*. The instrument comprised Section A, covering five demographic variables, and Section B, consisting of 24 items measuring the three study variables. Validity was confirmed by experts in Educational Management and Measurement and Evaluation at the University of Calabar. Reliability was established through a trial test on 50 similar

respondents using Cronbach's Alpha, yielding coefficients between 0.81 and 0.84, confirming the instrument's reliability. Data collection was facilitated by the researchers and 15 trained assistants, following institutional approval. Participants were briefed on the study's significance and assured of confidentiality. Out of 626 distributed questionnaires, 600 were correctly completed and used for analysis. Data were entered into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet, and responses were scored on a 4-point Likert scale. Positively worded items were scored from 4 (Strongly Agree) to 1 (Strongly Disagree), while negatively worded items had reversed scores. Data analysis was done using Pearson Product Moment Correlation and multiple linear regression to test hypotheses at a 0.05 significance level using SPSS v27. The results are presented in subsequent tables.

Result

Hypotheses one

There is no predictive power of entrepreneurship education management on skills acquisition among students in federal universities in South-South, Nigeria. The two variables in this hypothesis are management of entrepreneurship education and skills acquisition among students. The result of the data analysis is presented in table 1.

Table 1: Pearson Product Moment Correlation on the predictive power of entrepreneurship education management on skills acquisition among students in federal universities in South-South, Nigeria (n=600).

Variables	\bar{X}	S.D	r	Sig.
Management of entrepreneurship education	20.11	3.08		
Skills acquisition among students	19.47	3.05	.78*	.000

*Significant at $p < .05$; $df = 598$

Table 1 showed the correlation coefficients between management of entrepreneurship education and skills acquisition among students. The correlation coefficient was statistically significant for skills acquisition among students ($r = .78$, $p < .05$). Since $p(.000)$ is less than $p(.05)$, hypothesis one is rejected in terms of skills acquisition among students. The result of the analysis implied that there is a statistically positive significant relationship between management of entrepreneurship education and skills acquisition among students in federal universities in South-South, Nigeria.

Hypothesis two

Management of entrepreneurship education does not any significant predictive power on students' entrepreneurial intentions in federal universities in South-South, Nigeria. The two variables in this hypothesis are management of entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurial intentions among students. The result of the data analysis is presented in table 2.

Table 2

Pearson Product Moment Correlation on the predictive power of management of entrepreneurship education on students' entrepreneurial intentions in federal universities in South-South, Nigeria. (n=600).

Variables	\bar{X}	S.D	r	Sig.
Management of entrepreneurship education	19.31	4.37		
Entrepreneurial intentions among students	19.47	3.05	.89*	.000

*Significant at $p < .05$; $df = 598$

Table 2 showed the correlation coefficients between management of entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurial intentions among students. The correlation coefficient was statistically significant for entrepreneurial intentions among students ($r = .89$, $p < .05$). Since $p(.000)$ is less than $p(.05)$, hypothesis one is rejected in terms of entrepreneurial intentions among students. The result of the analysis implied that there is a statistically positive significant relationship between management of entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurial intentions among students in federal universities in South-South, Nigeria.

Discussion

The test of hypothesis one showed that, there was a statistically significant positive relationship between management of entrepreneurship education programme and skills acquisition among students in federal universities in South-South, Nigeria. This means that as the management of these programs improves, students' ability to acquire entrepreneurial skills also increases. It suggests that better planning, implementation, and supervision of entrepreneurship education led to enhanced practical skills, innovation, and self-reliance among students. The implication is that school administrators and policymakers should prioritize effective management strategies for entrepreneurship education to equip students with relevant skills for economic self-sufficiency and job creation.

The finding supports that of Jiddah (2016) who examined the impact of entrepreneurship education on graduates' business start-ups in North Central, Nigeria. The findings reveal that entrepreneurial career aspirations significantly influence graduates' ability to start businesses. Similarly, the finding is in agreement with that of Akpotohwo, Seidougha, and Ogeibiri (2016) who examined the entrepreneurial skills required by business education students for self-sustainability in Bayelsa State. The study adopted a descriptive survey design and was conducted at Niger Delta University, Bayelsa State. The findings concluded that entrepreneurial skills are crucial for effective business operations and self-sustainability. The finding also support the conclusion of Oboreh and Nnebe (2019) that entrepreneurship education had a significant positive effect on graduates' skill acquisition in public universities in South-East Nigeria.

The test of hypothesis two revealed that there was a statistically significant positive relationship between management of entrepreneurship education programme and entrepreneurial intentions among students in federal universities in South-South, Nigeria. The result means that effective management of entrepreneurship education enhances students' intentions to create jobs for themselves before or after graduation. This indicate that entrepreneurship programs are well-structured, properly implemented, and adequately supported, which help students acquire the necessary entrepreneurial skills, business knowledge, and mindset needed to start and sustain businesses. The implication is that improving the management of entrepreneurship education in tertiary institutions can reduce unemployment by equipping students with self-employment skills, fostering innovation, and promoting economic development of the states and country.

The finding aligns with that of Chukwuma and Ogbeide (2017) who conducted a study to assess the impact of entrepreneurial education on undergraduate students'

entrepreneurial intentions. The study found that the development of entrepreneurial skills and knowledge fostered students' aspirations to become self-employed in the future. The finding also supports that conclusion of Mei et al. (2020) that students who received higher levels of entrepreneurship education exhibited greater confidence in their entrepreneurial decision-making abilities, which, in turn, strengthened their entrepreneurial intentions. It is also in harmony with the findings of Wang and Ortiz (2022) who investigated the impact of entrepreneurship education on students' entrepreneurial intentions in China. The results revealed a statistically significant and positive relationship between entrepreneurship learning, entrepreneurial attitudes, entrepreneurship education, and students' entrepreneurial intentions.

Implications of the Study

The findings of this study highlighted that the efficient management of entrepreneurship education plays a crucial role in a depressed economy, serving as a key strategy for economic recovery, poverty reduction, and sustainable national development. A well-managed entrepreneurship education program equips students with practical skills necessary for self-employment. In a depressed economy where formal employment opportunities are limited, fostering entrepreneurship at the tertiary level can lead to the creation of small and medium enterprises (SMEs), thereby reducing youth unemployment. Additionally, entrepreneurship education encourages innovation and the development of new business ventures in various sectors, including agriculture, technology, and manufacturing. This diversification is essential in a depressed economy as it reduces over-reliance on a single sector and promotes economic resilience. Effective management of entrepreneurship education can lead to the production of skilled individuals who contribute to increased productivity in the economy. Through acquiring entrepreneurial skills, students can start their own businesses or improve existing ones, thereby generating income for themselves and their families. These individuals will create value through innovation, and the provision of goods and services that meet societal needs particularly in Nigeria, where economic opportunities abound. Also, A lack of economic opportunities often leads to an increase in crime, drug abuse, and other social vices. By ensuring that students acquire the necessary entrepreneurial skills while still in school, they are more likely to engage in productive ventures rather than resort to illegal activities for survival. A nation with a strong entrepreneurial culture is more competitive in the global economy. When entrepreneurship education is properly managed, it produces a workforce that is creative, innovative, and capable of driving economic growth, even in challenging economic conditions.

Conclusion

The findings of this study established that the management of entrepreneurship education programmes has a significant positive relationship with skills acquisition and entrepreneurial intentions among students in federal universities in South-South, Nigeria. This highlighted the essential role of a properly-managed entrepreneurship education which significantly contributes to students' ability to start businesses and secure employment. Moreover, the connection between entrepreneurship education management and entrepreneurial intentions suggests that students who undergo well-structured entrepreneurship training are more likely to develop innovative business ideas, thereby reducing unemployment and promoting economic growth. This is particularly beneficial in areas with limited formal job opportunities.

Recommendations

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

1. The government in collaboration with institutional administrators should enhance the management of entrepreneurship education programs by ensuring adequate funding, proper curriculum implementation, and continuous teacher training. This will enable students to acquire practical entrepreneurial skills that promote self-employment and job creation, thus contributing to economic growth.
2. University management should incorporate hands-on training, mentorship programs, and access to startup capital into entrepreneurship education to better prepare students for real-world business challenges. This approach will help bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application, empowering graduates to establish and sustain successful entrepreneurial ventures.

Contribution to Knowledge

This study contributes to knowledge by highlighting the critical role of effective management practices in enhancing students' entrepreneurial competencies. It provides empirical evidence on how well-structured entrepreneurship education can serve as a strategic tool for skills acquisition and entrepreneurial intentions which will foster job creation in a depressed economy. Furthermore, the findings offer valuable insights for stakeholders on the importance of strengthening entrepreneurship education to foster innovation, self-employment, and sustainable economic development of the nation.

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