

DETERMINATION OF COPING STRATEGIES FOR BUSINESS EDUCATION PROGRAMMES IN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES IN THE PERIOD OF SOCIO-POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC UNCERTAINTY

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Abstract

The need to curb the effect of socio-political and economic uncertainty on education necessitated this study to determine coping strategies for university business education programmes in South-East Nigeria. Two research questions guided the study and four null hypotheses were tested. The study adopted descriptive survey research design. The population of the study comprised 68 Business Education lecturers in all five public universities that run Business Education programme in the area of study. The entire population was studied without sampling because the size was not too large. A 4-point rating scale questionnaire titled “Coping Strategies for Business Education Programme Questionnaire” (CSBEPQ) was used to collect data for the study. The instrument was validated by three experts. The internal consistency method was used to test the reliability of the instrument by administering it to 12 business education lecturers from a university outside the area of study with Cronbach Alpha to obtain an overall reliability coefficient value of 0.87. The researchers collected data for the study with the help of three research assistants using on-the-spot completion and retrieval method to ensure a high response rate. Thus, all copies of the instrument were retrieved representing 100% response rate and used for analysis. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions and determine whether the respondents were homogeneous in their views. The null hypotheses were tested using t-test statistics and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) at 0.05 level of significance. Fund raising, donations, collaboration and linkages, use of goggle classroom and zoom among others were found to be the coping strategies for Business Education programmes in universities in the area of study in a period of socio-political and economic uncertainty. Gender did not significantly influence the views of the respondents on both funding and teaching and learning but years of experience did. The study concluded that failure to implement suitable coping strategies will hinder sustainability of the programmes and achievement of their objectives. It was, therefore, recommended that business education departments and management of universities should adopt the 10 funding strategies while lecturers

should adopt the innovative methods of teaching to cope with the challenges of socio-political and economic uncertainty.

Keywords: Coping strategies, Business Education programme, Socio-political, Economic uncertainty.

Introduction

Education has proven to be a lifelong instrument for socio-political change as well as a veritable tool for technological advancement, national building and development. According to Nwaiwu, Dikeocha and Ugochukwu (2012), education is the total development of the individual mentally, physically, psychologically, morally, and socially to enable them achieve their optimum and contribute meaningfully to the development of the society. Many challenges, such as inadequate funding, insufficient qualified teachers, teaching and learning equipment, facilities and materials, overpopulated classrooms, incessant strikes, insecurity and political instability among others have persistently undermined achievement of educational objectives in different fields in Nigeria. This was why Rabago-Mingoa (2017) asserted that teachers struggle with inadequate finance, insufficient materials, balancing diverse need of learners and many more. The aforementioned challenges had and are still affecting effective teaching and learning of Business Education in Nigerian universities including those in the South-East.

Business Education is an aspect of vocational and technical education which has a significant role in shaping the socio-economic future of Nigeria. It is concerned with teaching the skills, attitudes and knowledge needed for a successful business career. According to Onojeta (2014), Business Education is a vocational discipline that prepares its recipients with skills that will enable them to contribute significantly to the economic development of a nation. The American Vocational Association in Okoro (2013) described business education as a broad and comprehensive discipline whose instructional programme encompasses knowledge, skill, vocation and aptitude needed by all citizens in order to effectively manage their personal businesses and also function in the economic system. Furthermore, Odike and Nnaekwe (2017) explained that Business Education is a programme designed to equip learners with both academic and vocational skills needed for both salaried jobs and self-employment as entrepreneurs. Business Education, therefore, is that aspect of vocational education that equips the recipients with wide range of skills, knowledge, and attitudes to enter and progress in the dynamics of ever changing world of work.

Business Education, as a course of study, has very laudable objectives but is capital intensive requiring ample funding for human resources, equipment/machines, facilities and materials to establish, effectively run and maintain. The objectives of the programme, as stipulated by Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004) include to: provide the business knowledge and vocational skills necessary for industrial, commercial and economic development; provide trained manpower in applied technology and commerce, particularly at sub-professional grades; provide people who can apply scientific knowledge to the improvement and solution of economic and environmental problems for the use and convenience of man; and enable our young men and women to have an intelligent understanding of the increasing complexity of technology. Implicit in the definitions and objectives of Business Education is that the programmes should equip learners with numerous marketable skills to enable them become self-reliant, make positive impacts in office and industry and contribute meaningfully to national economic and technological development. In spite of these

expectations of Business Education directly to individuals and the Nigerian nation, it is unfortunate that it witnesses so many implementation challenges which are worsened in the period of socio-political and economic uncertainty. It is, therefore, worrisome to note that the requirements for the programmes are not adequately provided in different universities and other tertiary educational institutions offering it thereby hampering their effective implementation.

Socio-political and economic uncertainty refers to a state of unpredictability and instability in a country's social, political, and economic systems. The uncertainty may have far reaching consequences on individuals, businesses, government and educational institutions. Socio-political uncertainty may include social unrest and protest, political instability such as changes in government and coup, conflict and violence, human rights violation as well as ethnic and religious issues. On the other hand, economic uncertainty may include high level unemployment, poverty, income instability, inflation and recession as well as currency fluctuations among others.

According to Baragua (2022), coping refers to an action or actions taken by an individual concerning internal and external demands of situations perceived as a threat or barrier to achieving personal goals. It means to deal with and overcome struggles and difficulties in life. It can as well be referred to as strategies used to manage a negative or stressful event. Therefore, coping strategies are the specific efforts, both behavioral and psychological, that people employ to master, tolerate, reduce or minimize the impacts of stressful situations. Blum and Silver (2012) explained coping strategies to be tactics used to manage crises, conditions and demands that are appraised as distressing. Coping strategies are mechanisms that can be used to adjust to the changes and uncertainties that occur. Therefore, understanding the impacts of these socio-political and economic uncertainties on university Business Education programmes and strategizing to cope with them is crucial to its sustainability and effectiveness, hence this study.

Statement of the Problem

Several factors have been identified to be hindering effective teaching and learning of Business Education in Nigerian universities and other tertiary educational institutions. Government is the key funder of public education in Nigeria and adequate funding is required to provide relevant human and material resources for Business Education. Therefore, the perennial inadequate funding of education by government is the main cause of inadequacies in human and material resources which constitute serious challenges in effective curriculum implementation in different educational programmes in Nigerian universities especially Business Education which is capital intensive. These challenges become more complicated during periods of socio-political and economic uncertainties. However, the good news is that it is possible to grapple with these uncertainties and still achieve desirable results when suitable coping strategies are identified and implemented. Therefore, stakeholders in business education should not fold their hands and cry for government to improve funding or eliminate different socio-political and economic challenges while the programmes, their implementers and students lag behind in what they are expected to achieve and contribute to the national development.

It is a known fact that public-private partnership can go a long way in improving funding for education to provide relevant instructional resources. Furthermore, the digital world has brought about innovative educational technologies that can help make teaching and learning processes less stressful and still more

effective by reaching, connecting, sharing resources and collaborating remotely. It is based on these that this study was conducted to ascertain whether adopting alternative funding sources and digital technologies for teaching and learning will serve as suitable coping strategies for university Business Education programmes in South-East Nigerian in a period of socio-political and economic uncertainty

Purposes of Study

The major purpose of the study was to determine the coping strategies for Business Education programmes in public universities in South-East, Nigeria in a period of socio-political and economic uncertainty. Specifically, the study determined the:

1. Coping strategies for funding university Business Education programmes in a period of socio-political and economic uncertainty.
2. Innovation coping strategies for teaching and learning in Business Education programmes in public universities in South-East, Nigeria in a period of socio-political and economic uncertainty.

Research Questions

In line with the specific purposes, the following research questions guided the study:

1. What are the coping strategies for funding university Business Education programmes in South-East, Nigeria a period of socio-political and economic uncertainty?
2. What are the innovative coping strategies for effective teaching and learning in Business Education programmes in public universities in South-East, Nigeria a period of socio-political and economic uncertainty?

Hypotheses

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

- H0₁:** There is no significant difference in the mean scores of male and female business education lecturers in public universities in South-East, Nigeria on coping strategies for funding Business Education programmes in a period of socio-political and economic uncertainty.
- H0₂:** Respondents do not differ significantly in their mean ratings on the coping strategies for funding Business Education programmes in a period of socio-political and economic uncertainty based on years of experience (1-5 years, 6-10 years, above 10 years).
- H0₃:** There is no significant difference in the mean scores of male and female business education lecturers in public universities in South-East on coping strategies for teaching and learning in business education programmes in a period of socio-political and economic uncertainty.
- H0₄:** Respondents do not differ significantly in their mean ratings on innovative coping strategies for teaching and learning in Business Education in a period of socio-political and economic uncertainty based on years of experience (1-5 years, 6-10 years, above 10 years).

Methods

Descriptive survey research design was used for the study. The area was South-East Nigeria, consisting of five states, namely: Imo, Anambra, Enugu, Abia and Ebony States. Population of the study consisted of 68 business education lecturers in all the five public universities in the area of study offering the programme. The entire

population was studied without sampling because the size was not too large. The instrument for data collection was a four-point rating scale questionnaire titled “Coping Strategies for Business Education Programme Questionnaire” (CSBEPQ). The instrument was validated by three experts; two from Business Education, Department of Technology and Vocational Education and one in measurement and evaluation unit of the Department of Educational Foundations, Faculty of Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe university Awka. Internal consistency method was used to test the reliability of the instrument by administering it to 12 Business Education lecturers from a university outside the area of study and using Cronbach alpha. Reliability coefficient values of 0.85 and 0.89 were obtained for the two sections of the instrument with an overall reliability coefficient value of 0.87. Data for the study were collected by the researchers with the help of three research assistants using on the spot completion and retrieval method which facilitated a 100% response rate as all the copies were completed, retrieved and used for analysis. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions and determine whether the respondents were homogeneous in their views while the t-test and analysis of variance (ANOVA) were used to test the null hypotheses at 0.5 level of significance. Decision on the research questions was based on cluster means scores using a cut-off mean score of 2.50. A cluster mean score that is below 2.50 is disagreed while 2.50 and above is agreed. A null hypothesis was accepted where the p-value was equal to or greater than the alpha level of 0.05 and rejected where the p-value was less than the alpha level. The analysis was done with the statistical package for social science (SPSS) **add the version.**

Results

Table 1: Coping strategies for funding university Business Education programmes in a period of socio-political and economic uncertainty (N = 68)

SN	The funding strategies include:	\bar{X}	SD	Rmks
1	Fund Raising	3.47	0.50	Agree
2	Donations for development of education resources and infrastructure by Alumni	3.48	0.55	Agree
3	Establishment of business outlets	3.35	0.61	Agree
4	Support by Teachers/Lecturers	2.38	0.84	Disagree
5	Philanthropists	3.42	0.60	Agree
6	Support by business Men and Women	3.69	0.46	Agree
7	Civil Societies	3.54	0.58	Agree
8	Religious Organizations	3.72	0.56	Agree
9	Host Community	3.67	0.47	Agree
10	Parents/Guardians	3.45	0.76	Agree
11	Through collaboration and linkages with foreign institutions	3.42	0.57	Agree
	Cluster Summary	3.47	0.50	Agree

Table 1 shows that 10 out of the 11 funding strategies have mean scores ranging from 3.35 to 3.72 which are all greater than the cut-off mean of 2.50 on 4-point rating scale while one has mean score of 2.38. This implied that the respondents agreed that the 10 funding strategies are suitable for sustaining university Business Education programmes in a period of socio-political and economic uncertainty. The cluster mean score of 3.47 shows that alternative funding is a suitable coping strategy for Business Education in a period of socio-political and economic uncertainty. The standard

deviation values for all the items ranged from 0.46 to 0.84 and indicates that the respondents are not wide apart in their mean ratings.

Table 2: Summary of t-test of significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female respondents on funding coping strategies for Business Education programmes in a period of socio-political and economic uncertainty

Variables	N	\bar{X}	SD	DF	Std. Error	t-Cal	t-tab	p-value	Decision
Male Lecturers	38	3.42	0.57						
				66	0.028	0.16	1.96	0.87	NS
Female Lecturers	30	3.41	0.59						

Table 2 shows that the t-calculated (t-cal) value of 0.16 is less than the t-table (t-tab) value of 1.96 at 66 degree of freedom while the p-value is 0.87 which is greater than the alpha value ($p\text{-value} > 0.05$). This indicates that there was no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female respondents on funding coping strategies for university Business Education programmes in South-East, Nigeria in a period of socio-political and economic uncertainty. Therefore, the null hypothesis of no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female respondents was accepted.

Table 3: ANOVA summary of test of significant difference in respondents mean ratings on funding coping strategies for university Business Education programmes in a period of socio-political and economic uncertainty based on years of experience (1-5 years, 6-10 years, above 10 years)

Sources of Variance	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F-Cal	F-Tab	Level of Sig	P-value	Decision
Between Groups	0.080	2	0.40	3.27	3.00	0.05	0.03	S*
Within Groups	2.051	65	0.22					
Total	2.131	67						

Table 3 shows that the calculated F-value of 3.27 is greater than the F-critical value of 3.00 and the p-value of 0.03 is less than the alpha level ($p\text{-value} < 0.05$). This implies that there was significant difference in the mean ratings of the respondents on the funding coping strategies for university Business Education programmes in a period of socio-political and economic uncertainty as a result of their teaching

experience. Consequently, the null hypothesis of no significant difference in the mean responses of the three groups was rejected.

Table 4: Innovative strategies for coping with teaching and learning in university Business Education programmes in a period of socio-political and economic uncertainty(N= 68)

SN	The innovative strategies include:	\bar{x}	SD	Rmks
1	Adoption of task-based/problem solving approach to teaching and learning	3.47	0.61	Agree
2	Sharing learning resources	3.64	0.53	Agree
3	Use of goggle classroom	3.38	0.73	Agree
4	Use of zoom	3.75	0.43	Agree
5	Use of internet for research work	3.41	0.65	Agree
6	Use of Whatsapp voice note	3.57	0.52	Agree
7	Fostering communication and collaboration through online discussion	3.60	0.55	Agree
Cluster Summary		3.54	0.49	Agree

Table 4 reveals that the mean scores for all seven innovative teaching strategies ranged from 3.38 to 3.75 which are all greater than the cut-off mean value of 2.50. This means that the respondents agreed with the use of the seven innovative teaching strategies for coping with teaching and learning in university Business Education programmes. The cluster summary mean was 3.54 indicates that innovative teaching strategies are suitable for coping with the teaching and learning in university Business Education programmes in a period of socio-political and economic uncertainty. The standard deviation values for all the items ranged from 0.43 to 0.73 which indicates that the respondents are not wide apart in their mean ratings on innovative teaching strategies.

Table 5: Summary of t-test of significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female respondents on innovative strategies for coping with teaching and learning in university Business Education programmes in a period of socio-political and economic uncertainty

Variables	N	\bar{X}	SD	DF	Std. Error	t-Cal	t-tab	p-value	Decision
Male Lecturers	38	3.50	0.45						
				66	0.033	1.35	1.96	0.32	NS
Female Lecturers	30	3.57	0.49						

Note: NS = Not Significant at 0.05.

Table 5 shows that the t-calculated (t-cal) value of 1.35 is less than the t-table (t-tab) value of 1.96 at 66 degrees of freedom and p-value of 0.32 which is less than the alpha value ($p < 0.05$). This implies that there was no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female on innovative strategies for coping with teaching and learning in university Business Education programmes in a period of socio-political and economic uncertainty. Therefore, the null hypothesis of no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female respondents was accepted.

Table 6: ANOVA summary of test of significant difference in respondents' mean ratings on innovative strategies for coping with teaching and learning in university Business Education programmes in a period of socio-political and economic uncertainty based on years of experience (1-5 years, 6-10 years, above 10 years)

Sources of Variance	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F-Cal	F-Tab	Level of Sig	P-value	Decision
Between Groups	0.458	2	0.23	4.08	3.00	0.05	0.01	S*
Within Groups	3.649	65	0.06					
Total	4.107	67						

Table 6 shows that the F-calculated (F-cal) value of 4.08 is greater than the F-critical value of 3.00 and p-value of 0.01 which is less than alpha value ($p < 0.05$). This indicates that there was significant difference in the mean ratings of the respondents with 1-5 years, 6-10 years and above 10 years of experience on the innovative strategies for coping with teaching and learning in university Business Education programmes in a period of socio-political and economic uncertainty. The null hypothesis of no significant difference in the mean ratings of the three groups was, therefore, rejected.

Discussion

Findings of the study revealed 10 funding coping strategies for university Business Education programmes in South-East. Nigeria in a period of socio-political and economic uncertainty which include fund raising, donations for development of education resources and infrastructure by Alumni, establishment of business outlets, philanthropists and support by business men and women among others. This finding corroborates the report of Industrial Training Fund (ITF, 2013) that adequate funding and financial resources should be made available to technical and vocational education because it promotes the provision of essentials materials, facilities and machines to equip laboratories and workshops with relevant textbooks and training manuals. Similarly, the finding is in agreement with that of Tarus, Gichoya and Muumbo (2015) that the expansion of learning infrastructure can be achieved through provision of stable power supply and adequate funding for integrating modern technologies in teaching and learning. This finding also agree with UNESCO (2023) which identified strategic measures for successful integration of digital learning facilities into vocational education programmes to include improved funding and adequate provision of modern learning resources among others. The findings of this

study is also similar with that of Udo (2015) and Utoware and Kren-Ikidi (2015) which revealed that Business Education programme can be funded through fund raising, donation by alumni associations, donations from clubs and organizations, establishment of commercialized relaxation centre by the department, established of cyber-cafe by Business Education department among others.

The findings revealed that gender did not significantly influence the respondents' mean ratings on funding coping strategies for Business Education programmes in the period of socio-political and economic uncertainty but years of teaching experience did. The finding is consistent with that of Ezenwafor, Okeke and Enemu (2013) that engaging in community services for survival, business center operations and generating income through internet services are coping opportunities in challenges of economic crisis.

Furthermore, findings of the study revealed several innovative teaching and learning coping strategies for university Business Education programmes in a period of socio-political and economic uncertainty. These include adoption of task-based/problem solving approach to teaching and learning, sharing learning resources, use of goggle classroom, use of zoom, use of internet for research work, use of Whatsapp voice note and fostering communication and collaboration through online discussion. This finding agrees with the submission of Koller, Harvey and Magnotta (2020) that innovative technologies and skills are required by educators as it offers accessibility training that is self-paced and matched to the learners' needs and effective instructional delivery. The finding also agrees with Barroso (2019) which reported that innovative instructional implementation involves use of digital instructional resources such as software and computer apps that facilitate personalized online instruction for students. In addition, the finding is in consonance with that of Lin and Huang (2021) which revealed that enhancing professional quality of online teaching, establishing online classroom principles and unblocking the communication channels among teachers and students to seek common good through collaborative work are coping strategies for teaching and learning. Finally, the finding is in line with that of Onojeta (2020) that improved internet connectivity, adoption of more interactive instructional methods and use of ICT instructional delivery platforms are coping strategies for achieving the objectives of Business Education.

Findings of the study also revealed that gender did not significantly influence the respondents' mean ratings on innovative teaching and learning coping strategies for university Business Education programmes in a period of socio-political and economic uncertainty but teaching experience did. This finding collaborates that of Lin and Huang (2021) that some coping strategies which operate for someone else might not work for others since an individual utilizes a variety of coping mechanisms that are dependent on specific contexts and experiences. This observation of Lin and Huang could be the reason for significant difference in respondents' mean ratings on innovative teaching and learning coping strategies for university Business Education programmes in a period of socio-political and economic uncertainty based on teaching experience.

Conclusion

Socio-political and economic uncertainty has dominated recent roundtable discussions in most developing countries including Nigeria. Hence, the need to strategize through reengineering technical and vocational education programmes in

Nigerian tertiary institutions to address the uncertainty. Findings of the study confirm the need to identify and adopt suitable funding and innovative teaching and learning strategies to ensure the sustainability and effectiveness of Business Education programmes in universities in South-East, Nigeria. Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that where suitable coping strategies are not urgently adopted to fund university Business Education programmes, the problem of inadequacy of relevant teaching and learning resources will continue to cripple the efforts of lecturers and students thereby depriving the nation the benefits of the programmes.

Recommendations

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

1. The administrators of Business Education programmes in public universities should embrace the ten identified strategies to address the challenges of inadequate funding and other implementation problems affecting the realization of the objectives of the programmes in Nigeria.
2. University Business Education lecturers should adopt innovative methods of teaching to cope with the current challenges of socio-political and economic uncertainty.
3. University Business Education students should adopt innovative learning strategies to cope with the challenges of socio-political and economic uncertainty.
4. Government should provide enabling environments for adoption of innovative methods of teaching and learning in university Business Education programmes by improving security and power generation.

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