

**ADAPTING BUSINESS EDUCATION
CURRICULUM TO SOCIO-ECONOMIC
CHALLENGES IN NIGERIA: ROLES OF
INCLUSIVE BUSINESS EDUCATION
PROGRAMMES IN TIMES OF
UNCERTAINTIES**

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ABSTRACT

The need to prepare business education students to tackle socio-economic challenges necessitated this study. The study examined the implementation of inclusive business education programmes to enhance the preparation and engagement of students in the period of socio-economic challenges in Nigeria. Two research questions and three null hypotheses guided the study. The study adopted survey research design, and 112 business education lecturers from four public tertiary institutions offering business education programme in Anambra State, Nigeria were studied without sampling. A-19 items structured questionnaire validated by three experts in the field of Business Education and Measurement and Evaluation Unit was used for data collection. The reliability of the instrument was established using trial-test while Cronbach alpha formula was used to calculate the correlation coefficient which yielded coefficient values of .88 and .79 for clusters B1 and B2 respectively with an overall coefficient index of .84 obtained. Data collected was analyzed using mean and standard deviation while t-test was used to test the null hypothesis at .05 level of significance. Findings showed that respondents agree that respondents disagree that inclusive education programmes covered in the study have been introduced into business education curriculum, and that modifications have been made in their teaching methods with a view of enhancing students' preparedness and engagement during challenging socio-economic periods. Years of experience of business education lecturers were not a significant factor on their responses in this regard. It was recommended among others that; Improve communication channels within the business education programme to ensure that information about the introduction of specific inclusive programmes and modifications in teaching methodologies is effectively disseminated. Regular updates, workshops and collaborative platforms can contribute to a shared understanding among business education lecturers.

Key Words: *Adaption, Business Education, Curriculum, Inclusiveness*

Introduction

Nigeria is currently dealing with a number of socio-economic issues that have made it difficult for the country to develop sustainably. Social and economic factors interact to create a variety of challenges that affect the general well-being of individuals and communities in Nigeria. These challenges may be found in many facets of the life of Nigerian citizens. For a sizable segment of the populace, socio-economic challenges have the potential to impede development, worsen inequality, and impair general quality of life (Constantine, 2017). Nigeria faces poverty, unemployment, economic disparities, unequal access to healthcare and education, and social exclusion and discrimination (United Nations, 2020; Nigerian Economic Summit Group (NESG, 2023).

Nigeria's socio-economic problems call for a coordinated strategy from all the stakeholders (government, organizations, civil society and education sector). Education is a crucial instrument for solving socio-economic challenges in Nigeria (NESG, 2023). It makes sense that Nigeria's federal and state governments are starting to reposition the education system to enable it solve the country's economic problems. The education sector plays a multi-faceted role of fostering economic growth, and human capital development. Given this, the government gave great weight to the establishment of educational programmes that are skill-oriented, can equip youths with requisite knowledge and skills to contribute to the nation's building (Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 2013). In keeping with this mandate, business education programme was incorporated into the Nigerian education system at various levels - secondary schools, vocational institutions, colleges, and universities.

Business Education is an aspect of Vocational Education programme that equips youths with the abilities and knowledge to succeed in a range of careers. Edet (2018) agreed that business education prepares students for jobs in countless of disciplines such as, but not limited to teaching, banking, manufacturing, marketing and ICT. Barde et al. (2022) posited that business education covers courses in Accounting, Entrepreneurship, Office Technology and Management (OTM) and Cooperative/Distributive Education. Similarly, Business education develops in youths 21st century skills such as communication, critical thinking, problem-solving, decision-making, leadership and teamwork among others. It offers training that aligns with the needs and trends of industries, ensuring graduates are well-prepared for the demands of the business sector, and incorporates a global perspective to help students understand the complexities of international trade, and cultural diversity.

In light of the socio-economic challenges facing Nigeria, business education curriculum must be adaptive in nature. To be adaptive implies that the curriculum is flexible and capable of meeting the changing realities of the society and economy. Adaptive curriculum entails adjusting assessments, teaching materials, strategies, and classroom environment to accommodate student's needs to enable them achieve their teaching-learning goals (Julka, 2016). This adaptability guarantees that students have the needed skills to manage the intricacies of today's socio-economic situation. Additionally, the curriculum becomes forward-looking and focused on preparing students to thrive in the face of evolving challenges, fostering a learning environment that mirrors the complexities of the real world, and equipping students with the resilience needed for success in their future careers.

In general, an adaptive business education curriculum can contribute to inclusive business education programme by catering to diverse students' learning needs, fostering equal opportunities, and accommodating various students' learning abilities. In agreement, Julka (2016) stated that creating an inclusive education (business education inclusive)

involved revisiting the curriculum components to ensure that they contain personalized and differentiated learning experiences, leverage technology to tailor learning experiences, and allows for flexible learning paths, enabling students to progress at their own pace among others. The National Curriculum Framework (NCF) 2005 as cited by Julka underscores the significance of making a curriculum “an inclusive and meaningful experience for students.

Inclusive education is a teaching paradigm in which all students, regardless of aptitude, learn together in a single setting (United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF, 2023). In the context of this study, inclusive business education is a style of teaching that attempts to give student, regardless of background, ability, or socio-economic level, fair and accessible learning opportunities. This method emphasizes diversity, equity, and inclusion in the classroom while taking into accounts the individual needs and viewpoints of students. Beyond conventional approaches, inclusive business education actively works to break down barriers, support diversity, and establish a welcoming environment for all students. McManis (2027) stated that successful inclusive education happens primarily through accepting, understanding, and attending to student differences and diversity, including physical, cognitive, academic, social, and emotional.

Inclusive education programmes include; professional development of teachers, provision of online learning modules and availability of free learning resources for all students (Alliance for Catholic Education, 2024). Similarly, the British Council (2023) listed inclusive education programmes as equitable financial investment in education, effective recruitment and retention of qualified lecturers as well as transparency and accountability of lecturers in the classroom. In business education, inclusive programmes may include; offering specific programmes on diversity, equity and inclusion by incorporating courses such as inclusive leadership, diversity in the workplace, and strategies for promoting inclusivity practices. Others may include mentorship programmes, targeted entrepreneurship programmes, accessibility of learning resources (textbooks, online materials, and multimedia content), and integrating cultural competency training to enhance students' understanding of diverse cultural perspectives.

Indeed, modifying business education teaching methodologies could be crucial to enhance students' preparedness for challenges in socio-economic periods. These modifications could be implemented through integrating real-world case studies that reflect the current socio-economic challenges, incorporating analysis of current economic events and trends, inviting guest speakers from various industries to share their experiences and insights, and using business simulations and role-playing exercises that simulate real-world economic scenarios. Other could be fostering interdisciplinary learning by integrating concepts from economics, sociology, political science, and other relevant disciplines, and leveraging technology to facilitate interactive and collaborative learning experiences.

Teaching business education in Nigerian tertiary institutions faces several challenges related to methodology. Many business education programmes in Nigerian tertiary institutions face challenges related to outdated curriculum content, limited practical application, and insufficient technology integration (Ugbah, 2019). These challenges can impact the effectiveness of the programme in preparing the youths for the dynamic business environment. Similarly, theoretical teaching often outweighs practical application in business education (Nwazor & Nwaukwa, 2015). Students may not have enough opportunities for hands-on experiences, internships, or real-world projects, limiting their ability to apply theoretical knowledge in practical business scenarios. Furthermore, insufficient technology integration in teaching business education courses makes it challenging for business

educators to provide personalized attention and interactive learning experiences which hinder students' participation in classroom activities. Furthermore, limited industry exposure, and traditional assessment methods may not effectively evaluate practical skills and critical thinking abilities (Angwaomaodoko, 2023). The influence of years of experience among business education lecturers is a significant factor in shaping their perceptions of modifications made to teaching methodologies, particularly concerning students' preparedness and engagement during challenging socio-economic periods. Experienced business education lecturers may exhibit a higher degree of adaptability and flexibility in incorporating modifications into their teaching methodologies compared to inexperienced lecturers. They may draw on a wealth of experience to assess the changing needs of students in the face of socio-economic uncertainty and adjust their teaching strategies accordingly. Similarly, experienced lecturers are likely to have a deeper understanding of industry trends and the practical implications of socio-economic challenges compared to inexperienced business education lecturers. This awareness could inform their modifications to teaching methodologies, ensuring that students receive relevant and up-to-date insights aligned with real-world scenarios compared to inexperienced business educators. This study therefore examined inclusive business education programme for preparation of students for socio-economic challenges of Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

The adaptation of business education curriculum to socio-economic challenges presents a critical concern in Nigeria, particularly in times of uncertainty. The evolving economic landscape demands a curriculum that is responsive to dynamic challenges, yet the roles of inclusive business education programme remain unclear. This raises questions about the effectiveness of current business education approaches in preparing students for the intricacies of a fluctuating economy and the extent to which inclusive programmes contribute to fostering resilience and innovation in the face of uncertainty. Addressing this problem is essential for ensuring that business education equips learners with the skills, knowledge, and adaptability required for success in the ever-changing socio-economic conditions of Nigeria, especially in Anambra State. Therefore, this study specifically examined (1) specific inclusive programmes introduced into business education curriculum in tertiary institutions in Anambra State, (2) modifications implemented in business education teaching methods to enhance students' preparedness and engagement in the socio-economic uncertainty.

Research Questions

The following Research questions guided the study:

1. What specific inclusive programmes have been introduced into business education curriculum to address diverse learning needs in tertiary institutions in Anambra State, Nigeria?
2. What specific modifications have been implemented in business education teaching methods to enhance students' preparedness and engagement in the context of socio-economic uncertainty?

Null hypotheses

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

H01: There is no significant influence of years of experience among faculty members in tertiary institutions in Anambra State, Nigeria, on the introduction of specific inclusive programmes within the business education curriculum to address diverse learning needs.

H02: There is no significant influence of years of experience among business education lecturers on their perception of modifications made to teaching methods aimed at enhancing students' preparedness and engagement during challenging socio-economic periods.

Method

The study adopted survey research design. It was carried out in Anambra State. The population of the study comprised 112 business education lecturers in public tertiary institutions offering business education programme in Anambra State (Source: Academic Planning Unit of these institutions as at 18th December, 2023). There was no sampling since the population was manageable. Instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled "Inclusive Business Education Curriculum for Enhancing Students' Preparedness in the Period of Socio-economic Challenges (IBEC-ESPPSC)". The instrument is in two sections; A and B. Section A elicits demographic information of the respondents such as years of experience while section is divided into clusters B1 and B2 covering the two research questions. B1 has 9 items on specific inclusive programmes that have been introduced into business education curriculum while B2 contains 10 items on modifications implemented in business education teaching methods to enhance students' preparedness and engagement in the period of socio-economic challenges. The instrument was structured on a four points rating scale of Strongly Agree (A), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD). The instrument was validated by two experts in the field of business education and one expert in Measurement and Evaluation.

The reliability of the instrument was established using trial testing method and data gathered were calculated using Cronbach alpha formula which yielded overall correlation coefficient values of .88 and .79 for clusters B1 and B2 respectively with an overall coefficient index of .84. The researcher administered copies of the questionnaire to the respondents in their offices with the help of three research assistants who were adequately briefed on the modalities for administering and retrieval of the questionnaire. Out of the 112 copies of the questionnaire distributed, 108 copies were correctly filled and returned and used for data analysis. Mean, standard deviation and t-test were used for data analysis. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions and determine the homogeneity of the respondents' ratings while t-test was used to test the two null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. A hypothesis was rejected where the p-value is less than the alpha value but accepted where the p-value is greater or equal to the alpha value. The analyses were done using SPSS version 23.0.

Results

Table 1: Respondents mean ratings and standard deviation on specific inclusive programmes introduced into the business education curriculum of tertiary institutions

S/N	Item Description	\bar{X}	SD	Remarks
1	Seminars and workshops that foster awareness and	1.67	.81	Disagree

2	understanding of different perspectives within the economy Established mentorship programmes to connect students with industry professionals to provide guidance and support.	2.01	.74	Disagree
3	Provide learning materials for all students with diverse learning needs.	2.13	.65	Disagree
4	Introduce entrepreneurship courses to develop students' skills for self-reliance	2.57	.59	Agree
5	Introduction of flexible learning options such as online courses to accommodate all students regardless of academic background	1.49	.84	Strongly Disagree
6	Incorporate cultural competency courses to help prepare students for global business environments and promotes an inclusive mindset.	1.41	.75	Strongly Disagree
7	Financial literacy programmes to enhance financial literacy.	1.58	.48	Disagree
8	Introduce leadership development programmes that emphasize inclusive leadership skills such as bias awareness, cultural intelligence, and fostering diverse and inclusive teams	2.15	.87	Disagree
9	Implement feedback mechanisms to gather input from students and lecturers to ensure continuous improvement of inclusive programmes based on real-time needs and experiences.	2.43	.73	Disagree
Cluster Mean		1.94		Disagree

Data in table 1 shows that item 1 has a mean score of 2.57 meaning that the respondents agree that there are entrepreneurship courses to development students' skills for self-reliance. Items 1, 2, 3, 7, 8 and 9 have mean scores of 1.58 and 2.43 showing that the respondents disagree that they are part of inclusive programmes introduced into business education curriculum while items 5 and 6 have mean scores of 1.41 and 1.49 showing that the respondents strongly disagree that they have been introduced into business education curriculum. The cluster mean score of 1.94 shows that on the whole, respondents disagree that almost all the inclusive programmes covered in this study have been introduced into business education curriculum in tertiary institutions in Anambra State. The standard deviation for all the items is within the same range showing that the respondents are not wide apart in their mean ratings.

Table 2: Respondents mean ratings and standard deviation on specific modifications have been implemented in business education teaching methods to enhance students' preparedness and engagement in the context of socio-economic uncertainty

S/N	Item Description	X	SD	Remarks
10	Integrate real-world case studies that reflect current socio-economic challenge	1.90	.76	Disagree
11	Industry-relevant projects that require students to address current challenges faced by industries, fostering problem-solving skills and industry awareness.	1.49	.67	Strongly Disagree
12	Invite industry experts for guest lectures to provide insights into the practical implications of socio-economic challenges and share real-world experiences.	1.47	.59	Strongly Disagree
13	Use technology tools and platforms to simulate business scenarios, enabling students to navigate	1.41	.61	Strongly Disagree
14	Incorporate discussions on current economic events and trends, helping students understand the impact of real-time changes on business operations	2.51	.70	Agree

15	Utilize adaptive learning platforms that tailor content to individual students' needs, ensuring personalized learning experiences and addressing diverse learning styles.	1.78	.82	Disagree
16	Collaboration with other disciplines to provide a holistic understanding of socio-economic challenges	2.57	.84	Agree
17	Incorporate a global perspective in teaching to expose students to international socio-economic dynamics.	1.56	.69	Disagree
18	Design exercises that promote critical thinking and analytical skills, challenging students to evaluate complex situations and develop innovative solutions.	1.60	.75	Disagree
19	Introduce scenarios that require ethical decision-making, preparing students to navigate socio-economic challenges while adhering to ethical business practices.	1.77	.83	Disagree
Cluster Mean		1.81		Disagree

Data in table 1 shows that items 14 and 16 have mean scores of 2.51 and 2.57 meaning that the respondents agree that they have been implemented in teaching business education courses to enhance students' preparedness in solving socio-economic challenges. Items 10, 15, 17, 18 and 19 have mean scores of 1.56 and 1.90 showing that the respondents disagree that they have been implemented in teaching business education courses while the remaining three items were rated strongly disagree with mean scores of 1.41 to 1.49. The cluster mean score of 1.81 shows that on the whole, respondents disagree that they modified their teaching methods with a view of enhancing students' preparedness and engagement during challenging socio-economic periods. The standard deviation for all the items is within the same range showing that the respondents are not wide apart in their mean ratings.

Table 3: Summary of t-test analysis of significant influence of years of experience among business education lecturers on the introduction of specific inclusive programmes within the curriculum to address students' diverse learning needs

Years of Experience	N	X	SD	df	t-value	P-value	Decision
1-5 years of experience	35	1.87	.75				
6 years and above	106	.27	.61				Not Significant
	732.00	.71					

Table 3 shows that the t-value of .27 with 106 degree of freedom has p-value of .61 which is greater than the alpha level of .05 ($P\text{-value} = .61 > .05$). The null hypothesis was therefore accepted. This means that there is no significant influence of years of experience among faculty members in tertiary institutions in Anambra State, Nigeria, on the introduction of specific inclusive programmes within the business education curriculum to address diverse learning needs.

Table 4: Summary of t-test analysis of significant influence of years of experience among business education lecturers on their perception of modifications made to teaching methods to enhance students' preparedness and engagement during challenging socio-economic periods

Years of Experience	N	X	SD	df	t-value	P-value	Decision
1-5 years of experience	35	1.75	.68				
6 years and above	731.92	.21	.09				Not Significant
	731.92	.73					

Table 4 shows that the t-value of 1.21 with 106 degree of freedom has p-value of 0.09 which is greater than the alpha level of 0.05 ($P\text{-value} = 0.09 > 0.05$). The null hypothesis was therefore accepted. This means that there is no significant influence of years of experience among business education lecturers on their perception of modifications made to teaching methods aimed at enhancing students' preparedness and engagement during challenging socio-economic periods.

Discussion of Findings

Findings of the study showed that respondents disagree that the majority of the inclusive programmes covered in the study have been introduced into business education curriculum to address students' diverse learning needs in tertiary institutions in Anambra State. This finding could be as a result of various reasons such as lack of awareness and understanding among faculty and administrators of business education about the importance of inclusive programmes in business education. It could also be due to insufficient knowledge about the benefits of inclusivity, or limited exposure to successful models, which hinder the initiation of specific programmes addressing diverse learning needs. Furthermore, business education departments may face resource constraints and a shortage of qualified personnel. In agreement, Koffi and Etukudo (2016) revealed that lack of qualified lecturers, poor curriculum implementation, and inadequate academic facilities hinder introduction of inclusive education in Nigerian tertiary institutions. Similarly, Angwaomaodoko (2023) found that inclusive education in Nigeria is still in its early stages and is faced with several challenges, including a lack of understanding and awareness, inadequate resources and infrastructure, and a shortage of qualified lecturers. Findings of the study also showed that there was no significant difference in the mean responses of business education lecturers on specific inclusive programmes introduced into business education curriculum to address students' learning needs. It could be that both experienced and inexperienced business education lecturers might have undergone similar training or professional development programmes related to inclusive education leading to shared understanding and similar perceptions regarding the introduced inclusive programmes.

Findings of the study revealed that respondents disagree that modifications have been implemented in business education teaching methodologies to enhance students' preparedness and engagement in the period of socio-economic challenges. It could be that business education lecturers lack effective communication or awareness. Obviously, when modifications are not well communicated to all business education lecturers, some may not be aware of the changes or enhancements made to teaching methodologies aimed at addressing socio-economic challenges. In addition, business education lecturers may have perceived the modifications made to teaching methodologies insufficient or ineffective in enhancing students' preparedness and engagement during socio-economic challenges. This is supported by Ugbah (2019) who revealed that business education lecturers still rely on traditional method of teaching, and some of them hardly introduce innovative teaching strategies in their instructional delivery. In addition, business educators are unable to utilize most of the innovative teaching strategies in their teaching. Nwazor and Nwaukwa (2015), Ogwunte and Okolocha (2016) and Onajite (2022) all found that most business educators were not paying enough attention to effective use of student-centered teaching methodologies to improve students' preparation to tackle socio-economic challenges of Nigeria. Findings also showed that experienced and inexperienced business education lecturers in tertiary institutions in Anambra State, Nigeria did not differ in their mean perceptions on the

modifications implemented in business education teaching methodologies to enhance students' preparedness and engagement in the period of socio-economic challenges. This could be due to the fact that both experienced and inexperienced business educators have undergone similarly standard of training programmes or workshops on adapting teaching methodologies to socio-political uncertainty. This could be the reason why they might share a common understanding and perspective.

Conclusion

The findings of the study indicate a potential gap in communication, awareness, or alignment of perceptions within the academic community. Based on the findings of the study, the researcher concluded that inclusive business education programme is not effectively implemented in departments so as to prepare students for socio-economic challenges ahead.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the researcher made the following recommendations;

1. Improve communication channels within the business education programme to ensure that information about the introduction of specific inclusive programmes and modifications in teaching methodologies is effectively disseminated. Regular updates, workshops and collaborative platforms can contribute to a shared understanding among business education lecturers.
2. Institute faculty development programmes that focus on inclusive education practices and the rationale behind modifications in teaching methodologies. Both experienced and inexperienced business education lecturers can benefit from training sessions that highlight the importance and impact of these changes on student preparedness and engagement.
3. Foster a culture of collaborative decision-making within business education departments. Engage business education lecturers in discussions and decision-making processes related to curriculum modifications and inclusive programmes. Involving business education lecturers in these decisions can enhance their sense of ownership and commitment.
4. Establish a systematic feedback mechanism where business education lecturers can provide their insights, concerns, and suggestions regarding introduced modifications and inclusive programmes. Regular feedback sessions can facilitate open communication, identify areas of improvement, and promote a sense of collective responsibility for the effectiveness of these initiatives.

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