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Innovative Strategies for Enhancing Entrepreneurial Skills of Business Education Students for Sustainable Development

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Abstract

This study looks into fresh, innovative ways to help business education students develop the entrepreneurial skills they need for sustainable development. The research was guided by two key research questions and tested two hypotheses, with the findings analyzed at a significance level of 0.05. The study employed a descriptive survey design, targeting 120 business education students from various universities. A self-developed structured questionnaire titled "Innovative Strategies for Enhancing Entrepreneurial Skills (ISESQ)" was developed by the researcher. Response options for the two research questions used a modified 4-point rating scale: 'Very High Extent (VHE)'-4 points, 'High Extent (HE)' - 3 points, 'Low Extent (LE)' - 2 points, and 'Very Low Extent (VLE)' - 1 point. The authenticity of this instrument was guaranteed when it went through a review process by two experts from the Business Education Department and one from Test and Measurement of Kwara State University, Malete, Nigeria, for face and content accuracy. The data collected was analyzed through Cronbach Alpha reliability co-efficient and the instrument shows a validated reliability coefficient of 0.71. The findings revealed that innovative strategies play a vital role in developing the entrepreneurial skills of business education students for sustainable development. It was recommended that universities should offer more experiential learning opportunities and build stronger partnerships with industries to close the gap between classroom theory and real-world business skills. These approaches will better equip business education graduates to succeed in entrepreneurship and actively support societal sustainability.

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Introduction

As the global business landscape becomes increasingly complex and interconnected, equipping business education students with entrepreneurial skills aligned with sustainable development is more important than ever. Innovative strategies are needed to cultivate these skills, enabling students to build businesses that drive economic growth while addressing social and environmental challenges. By integrating cutting-edge approaches into business education, institutions can prepare students to become forward-thinking entrepreneurs who contribute to a sustainable future and make a meaningful impact on the world.

Entrepreneurial skills have become increasingly important in business education, highlighting a shift towards nurturing innovation, self-reliance, and adaptability among students. As technology evolves rapidly and economic conditions fluctuate, skills like creativity, risk-taking, problem-solving, and strategic thinking have become essential for thriving in today's fast-changing business world (Peterson & Tilley, 2023). These abilities are not just about starting new businesses; they also play a key role in making meaningful contributions within established organizations. Isenberg (2022) pointed out that these skills help individuals recognize opportunities, adapt to change, and contribute to economic growth. The increased emphasis on entrepreneurship education underscores its vital role in equipping students to drive economic growth and development. As the demand for job creation grows and economic challenges persist, entrepreneurship is becoming a widely recognized solution. The World Economic Forum (2023) noted that entrepreneurship education is the key to addressing global problems of unemployment and economic instability. Similarly, the OECD (2024) highlighted that entrepreneurial skills cultivate resilience and adaptability, which are essential for managing the uncertainties of today's economies. By fostering an entrepreneurial mindset, educational institutions can help students navigate the job market's complexities, innovate in their professions, and contribute to economic stability and growth. Incorporating entrepreneurial skills into educational programs is increasingly seen as a crucial method for preparing students to face future economic challenges. Smith and Brown (2022) suggest that integrating entrepreneurial concepts into business education helps students adopt a

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proactive approach to solving problems and making decisions. This not only prepares them to launch and manage their ventures but also equips them with adaptable skills that are valuable across different professional fields. Educational models that prioritize hands-on learning and practical applications are vital for closing the gap between theoretical knowledge and real-world experience (Kuratko, 2023). By implementing such a curriculum, schools and universities can better prepare students to meet real-world entrepreneurial challenges and boost their chances of success in their careers. The increasing focus on entrepreneurship education also aligns with broader economic trends and societal needs. As noted by Johnson and Lee (2024), the growing demand for entrepreneurial skills reflects a shift towards valuing innovation and adaptability in the workforce. The rise of the gig economy and freelance work further underscores the need for these skills, as individuals are required to manage their careers and businesses with greater autonomy (Gamble, 2023). In this context, business education programs must embed with innovation and evolve, incorporating new teaching methodologies and technologies to better support students in acquiring these essential skills. This evolving landscape underscores the necessity for educational programs to continuously adapt and enhance their approaches to effectively prepare students for sustainable entrepreneurial careers (Cohen & Levinthal, 2023). In recent years, there has been a notable surge in efforts to integrate entrepreneurial education across various educational levels, driven by recognition of its importance in preparing students for the complexities of the modern business environment. This integration seeks to close the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application, to provide the students with hands-on experience that enhances their entrepreneurial readiness (Smith & Brown, 2022). The inclusion of entrepreneurial concepts into curricula reflects a broader educational trend towards aligning academic learning with real-world applications, thereby equipping students with the skills necessary to thrive in entrepreneurial roles (Wang & Chen, 2023). The need for innovative strategies in entrepreneurship education has become increasingly apparent, driven by the rapidly evolving demands of the job market and the entrepreneurial ecosystem. As the business environment undergoes continuous transformation due to technological advancements, globalization, and shifting market dynamics, traditional educational approaches often fall short of equipping students with the skills necessary to thrive in this new landscape. Consequently, there is a growing recognition of the need for innovative strategies that can better prepare students to navigate and capitalize on emerging opportunities

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within the entrepreneurial space (Chen et al., 2024). One of the major important innovations in entrepreneurship education is the adoption of experiential learning methods. Experiential learning offers students invaluable hands-on experience, equipping them with the creativity, problem-solving abilities, and strategic thinking needed to navigate complex entrepreneurial challenges. This approach emphasizes hands-on, practical experiences over traditional lecture-based instruction, allowing students to engage in real-world problem-solving and decision-making processes. Experiential learning methods, such as simulations, business incubators, and live case studies, provide students with invaluable opportunities to apply theoretical knowledge in practical contexts (Kolb & Kolb, 2023). Research by Anderson and Thomas (2024) highlights that such methods enhance students' ability to understand and tackle complex entrepreneurial challenges, fostering skills such as creativity, adaptability, and strategic thinking. Industry partnerships also play a critical role in advancing entrepreneurship education. Collaborations between educational institutions and industry leaders can offer students direct exposure to real-world business practices and networking opportunities. According to Brown and Patel (2024), these partnerships facilitate internships, mentorship programs, and project-based learning opportunities that bridge the gap between classroom learning and actual entrepreneurial practice. Industry partnerships further enrich the educational experience by providing direct exposure to real-world business practices and professional networks, enhancing students' readiness for entrepreneurial endeavors. By working closely with industry professionals, students gain insights into current market trends, business strategies, and innovation processes, which are essential for their future entrepreneurial endeavors. Recent research highlights the ongoing need for educational reforms that emphasize experiential learning and industry collaboration. Brown and Patel further argue that incorporating project-based learning, internships, and mentorship programs into business education curricula can significantly enhance students' entrepreneurial competencies by offering practical, real-world experiences. Additionally, the integration of digital tools and simulations has been shown to provide students with interactive and immersive learning experiences that better prepare them for entrepreneurial challenges (Anderson & Thompson, 2024). Sustainable development seeks to address today’s needs while preserving resources and opportunities for future generations. In the realm of business education, this concept is fundamental to shaping entrepreneurial skills that align with broader sustainability goals. Integrating sustainability into educational programs equips

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students with the necessary abilities to start and manage businesses that foster economic growth, enhance social equity, and safeguard environmental health. Training entrepreneurial skills with a focus on sustainability is more than just covering business basics; it's about nurturing responsible innovation and ethical decision-making. This approach helps students grasp how their business actions affect society and the environment and guides them in finding ways to address these effects. According to Schoeneborn and Trittin (2023), weaving sustainability into entrepreneurship education boosts students' ability to innovate thoughtfully and balance profit with social and environmental considerations. These innovative approaches are crucial for addressing the current gaps in entrepreneurial education and ensuring that students are well-prepared to navigate the demands of the modern business landscape. These innovative strategies not only enhance the relevance of business education but also ensure that students are well-prepared to adapt to and capitalize on emerging opportunities within the entrepreneurial space. As the global economy continues to evolve, the adoption of these forward-thinking approaches is crucial for fostering a new generation of entrepreneurial leaders who are capable of driving innovation and the necessity of evolving educational practices to meet the needs of today's dynamic entrepreneurial landscape, ultimately leading to more effective and impactful business education.

Statement of the problems

Innovative strategies for enhancing the entrepreneurial skills of business education students for sustainable development are increasingly critical, as traditional methods fail to equip students with the competencies needed for success in today's entrepreneurial landscape. Despite a growing emphasis on entrepreneurship education, many programs including Business education programs still rely heavily on theoretical instruction, which often falls short of bridging the gap between academic knowledge and practical application (Smith & Brown, 2022). This disconnects hampers students' readiness to handle the complexities of launching and managing new ventures. Current pedagogical approaches often neglect experiential learning and industry collaboration essential for developing practical entrepreneurial skills (Chen et al., 2024). This implies continued use of traditional methods has led to a significant mismatch between students' learning and the skills needed for real-world entrepreneurial challenges (Johnson & Lee, 2024). With the business environment evolving rapidly and increasing demand for adaptable entrepreneurs, urgent educational reforms are needed to integrate these innovative strategies. The World Economic

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Forum (2023) emphasizes that entrepreneurship education must evolve to tackle global challenges such as unemployment and economic instability. By incorporating experiential learning and industry partnerships business education can better prepare students to seize new opportunities and contribute to economic development. This study seeks to address this gap by evaluating and implementing innovative strategies to enhance entrepreneurial skills among business education students for sustainable development, aiming to develop more effective educational practices aligned with modern entrepreneurial demands.

Purpose of the study

The primary aim of this study is to explore innovative strategies for enhancing the entrepreneurial skills of business education students for sustainable development**.** Specifically, it focuses on:

Examining the influence of experiential learning on the development of entrepreneurial skills of business education students for sustainable development.

Assessing the role of industry partnerships in fostering entrepreneurial skills of business education students for sustainable development.

Research Questions

To what extent does experiential learning impact the development of entrepreneurial skills of business education students for sustainable development?

To what extent do industry partnerships impact the enhancement of entrepreneurial skills in business education students for sustainable development?

Hypotheses:

H_01: Experiential learning does not significantly impact the development of entrepreneurial skills of business education students for sustainable development.

H_{02} Industry partnerships have no significant impact on the enhancement of entrepreneurial skills of business education students for sustainable development.

Methodology A quantitative research approach was employed, with a population of 120 business education students from Universities in Kwara state. Due to the manageable size of the population censor sampling techniques were adopted. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire, titled "Innovative Strategies for Enhancing Entrepreneurial Skills Questionnaire (ISESQ)" was developed by the researcher. The instrument was organized into two sections:

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Section 1 and Section 2. Section 1 was used to gather demographic details from the respondents, while Section 2 contained 10 items designed to collect information on the questionnaire topics. The instrument provided responses to the two research questions using a modified 4-point rating scale of 'Very High Extent' (VHE)-4point, 'High Extent' (A) 3-point, 'Very Low Extent' (VLE)-2point, and 'Low Extent' (LE)-1point. To determine the validity of the instrument, the questionnaire underwent assessments for face validity and content validity by two experts from the Department of Business Education and Test Measurement of Kwara State University, Malete, Nigeria. The instrument was co-piloted using (15) business educators and students of Kwara State University, Malete. The collected data were analyzed with the Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient, which showed a reliability score of 0.71, indicating that the instrument was reliable. Data were administered physically using mean and standard deviation to address the research questions. Simple linear regression analysis was employed to test the research hypotheses. A mean score of 2.50 or higher was considered as Strongly Agree (SA) or Agree (A), while scores below 2.50 were categorized as Strongly Disagree (SD) or Disagree (D), respectively.

Results

Research Question One: To what extent does experiential learning enhance the development of entrepreneurial skills among business education students for sustainable development?

S/N	Item Statements	$\bar{X}$	SD	Remark
1.	experiential learning provides you with practical business experience that enhances your entrepreneurial skills.	2.51	0.82	**HE**
2.	experiential learning allows you to effectively apply theoretical knowledge to real-world business situations.	2.55	0.88	**HE**
3.	experiential learning helps you develop an entrepreneurial mindset, including risk-taking and innovation.	2.61	0.90	**HE**

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4.	Does experiential learning improve your problem-solving skills in business contexts?	2.53	0.63	**HE**
5.	experiential learning stimulates your creativity and ability to innovate in business.	2.52	0.62	**HE**
6.	experiential learning enhances your ability to work effectively in teams, which is crucial for entrepreneurial success	2.62	0.91	**HE**
7.	experiential learning increases your confidence in starting and managing a business venture	2.59	0.87	**HE**
8.	experiential learning enhances your understanding of the operational aspects of running a business	2.86	1.52	**HE**
9.	experiential learning provides opportunities for networking and building industry connections	2.57	0.90	**HE**
10.	experiential learning improves your adaptability and flexibility in dynamic business environments	2.88	1.25	**HE**
Weighted average		**3.01**	**0.95**	**VHE**

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation of responses on the extent to which experiential learning enhances the development of entrepreneurial skills of business education students

All 10 constructs in research question one had mean scores ranging from 2.51 to 2.99, reflecting a high degree to which experiential learning enhances the entrepreneurial skills of business education students for sustainable development. With a combined standard deviation of 0.95 and an overall weighted mean of 3.01, the findings suggest that experiential learning significantly improves the entrepreneurial skills of these students for sustainable development.

Research Question Two: To what extent do industry partnerships contribute to the enhancement of entrepreneurial skills of business education students for sustainable development?

Table 2: Mean and standard deviation of responses on the extent to which industry partnerships contribute to the enhancement of entrepreneurial skills of business education students

For sustainable development

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S/N	Item Statements	$\overline{X}$	SD	Remark
1.	Industry partnerships expose you to real-world business practices that enhance your entrepreneurial skills	2.77	1.0	**HE**
2.	Industry partnerships provide you with mentorship opportunities that help develop your entrepreneurial abilities	3.00	1.21	**VHE**
3.	Industry partnerships allow you to practically apply classroom knowledge in business settings	2.61	0.90	**HE**
4.	Industry partnerships facilitate internships and placements that contribute to your entrepreneurial skill development	3.14	1.33	**VHE**
5.	Industry partnerships enhance your ability to network with professionals in the industry, thereby improving your entrepreneurial skills	2.98	0.62	**HE**
6.	Industry partnerships help you understand market dynamics and trends, which are crucial for entrepreneurship	2.62	0.91	**HE**
7.	Industry partnerships encourage innovation and creativity in your entrepreneurial ventures.	2.99	0.62	**HE**
8.	Industry partnerships provide access to resources and technology that enhance your entrepreneurial skills	2.99	1.52	**HE**
9.	Industry partnerships provide opportunities to address real-world business challenges, supporting your growth as an entrepreneur.	2.57	0.90	**HE**

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10.	Industrial partnerships play a key role in advancing your long-term career by strengthening your entrepreneurial skills.	2.88	1.25	**HE**
Weighted average		**3.07**	**1.21**	**VHE**

As shown in Table 2, the mean scores of the entire construct addressing research question two had a high extent ranging from 3.14-2.57. The overall weighted mean score was 3.07, with a cumulative standard deviation of 1.21, indicating that industry partnerships contribute to the enhancement of entrepreneurial skills of business education students for sustainable development**.**

Testing of Hypotheses

$H_0$1: Experiential learning does not significantly impact the development of entrepreneurial skills of business education students for sustainable development.

Table 3: Simple Regression of experiential learning on the development of entrepreneurial skills of business education students for sustainable development

Variables	PPMC	Mean	SD	Beta	R^2	F
EXP	0.67	3.01	0.87	0.51*	0.32	20.05

P<0.05

The data in Table 3, revealed results of a high extent to which, experiential learning influences entrepreneurial development with a beta value of 0.51 ($p<0.05$). The overall regression analysis was statistically significant ($R^2 = 0.32$, $F(76) = 20.05$, $p<0.05$). This implies that experiential learning has a significant impact on the development of entrepreneurial skills among business education students for sustainable development.

$H_0$2: Industry partnerships have no significant impact on the enhancement of entrepreneurial skills of business education students for sustainable development.

Table 4: Simple Regression of industry partnership on entrepreneurial skills of business education students for sustainable development

Variables	PPMC	Mean	SD	Beta	R^2	F
IP	0.52	3.07	1.21	0.61*	0.30	0.15

P<0.05

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The data in Table 4, revealed results of the high extent to which, industry partnership affects entrepreneurial development with a beta value of 0.61 ($p<0.05$). The overall regression analysis was statistically significant ($R^2 = 0.30$, $F(76) = 0.15$, $p<0.05$). This implies that industrial partnership has a significant effect on the enhancement of entrepreneurial skills among business education students for sustainable development.

Discussion of findings

The findings revealed the extent to which experiential learning boosts the development of entrepreneurial skills among business education students for sustainable development. This was backed up by hypothesis one, which confirmed that experiential learning plays a significant role in shaping these students' entrepreneurial skills of business education students for sustainable development. This was further postulated by Kolb (2015) who observed that experiential learning provides students with opportunities to apply theoretical concepts in real-world settings, which significantly enhances their entrepreneurial skills. Morris et al. (2021) emphasize that experiential learning plays a crucial role in helping students connect theory with practice. By engaging in real-world experiences, students are better equipped to apply their classroom knowledge, which in turn strengthens their entrepreneurial abilities. Yousafzai et al. (2022) emphasize that experiential learning is key to building entrepreneurial confidence. Through hands-on experience with real-world business challenges, students gain the confidence needed to succeed as entrepreneurs by directly facing and overcoming obstacles. This means that experiential learning is all about gaining knowledge by turning real-life experiences into valuable lessons. This approach allows students to engage in active problem-solving and decision-making, which are crucial for entrepreneurship.

The findings from research question two ascertained the extent to which industrial partnerships help improve entrepreneurial skills among business education students for sustainable development. This is further confirmed by hypothesis two, which indicates that industrial partnerships have a significant impact on the development of entrepreneurial skills in these students. Adams and Williams (2024) revealed that Collaborations between educational institutions and industries provide students with the practical skills and real-world insights needed to enhance their entrepreneurial abilities. This implies that industry-based projects and internships play a significant role in bridging the gap between theory and practice. Akintola and Adewale

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(2022) emphasized that industrial partnerships offer business education students valuable opportunities to engage in hands-on projects, internships, and mentorship programs. These experiences are vital for developing entrepreneurial skills. The implication is that such partnerships give students practical experience and real-world exposure, which are essential for refining their entrepreneurial abilities. By participating in these activities, students can effectively connect their academic learning with practical application, ultimately preparing them better for entrepreneurial challenges and enhancing their skill set for sustainable development.

Conclusion

The findings highlight the significance of using innovative strategies to develop entrepreneurial skills of business education students for sustainable development. To effectively prepare them for the challenges they'll face in the business world, it's essential to implement these strategies. Experiential learning, such as internships and practical projects, is key to bridging the gap between classroom theory and real-world application. Additionally, establishing strong industry partnerships offers students valuable insights, mentorship, and networking opportunities that enrich their education. Integrating these methods into educational programs will better nurture students' entrepreneurial skills and prepare them for their future careers. Adopting these approaches will lead to a more engaging and practical learning environment, which is vital for developing the skills needed for sustainable entrepreneurial success.

Recommendation

Based on the researcher's findings and conclusion, the following recommendations were drawn:

1. Universities should offer more experiential learning opportunities and build stronger partnerships with industries to close the gap between classroom theory and real-world business skills. These approaches will better equip business education graduates to succeed in entrepreneurship and actively support societal sustainability
2. The university should work on deepening its ties with local businesses to offer more opportunities for collaborative projects, guest lectures, and industry-specific events. Such partnerships will provide students with valuable industry insights and hands-on experience, enhancing their entrepreneurial skills and sustainable development.

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