



Entrepreneurship Education and Vocational Skill Development as Drivers of Inclusive Growth Among Business Education Graduates in Public Universities in South-South Nigeria

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Abstract

This study examined entrepreneurship education and vocational skill development as drivers of inclusive growth among Business Education graduates in Public Universities in South-South Nigeria. The study was guided by two objectives, two research questions, and two hypotheses. The study adopted a descriptive research design. The population comprised 1,496 final-year Business Education students in Public Universities across the South-South region of Nigeria, while a sample of 303 respondents was selected using the Krejcie and Morgan sample size determination table. Data were collected using two validated instruments titled Inclusive Growth Among Business Education Graduates Questionnaire (IGBEGQ) and Instructional Delivery of Business Education Programmes Questionnaire (IDBEPQ), with an overall reliability coefficient of 0.84 determined through Cronbach's alpha. Data analysis was conducted using the arithmetic mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions, while the hypotheses were tested using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMC) at the 0.05 level of significance. Findings revealed that entrepreneurship education and vocational skill development serve as drivers for inclusive growth and employability among Business Education graduates. The study concluded that vocational skill development plays a vital role in enhancing the employability and economic inclusion of Business Education graduates in public universities in South-South Nigeria. Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made, among others that; Public universities in South-South Nigeria should strengthen the Business Education curriculum by integrating more practical and industry-relevant vocational modules. This will ensure that graduates acquire hands-on competencies that enhance their employability and enable them to participate effectively in inclusive economic activities

Keywords: Entrepreneurship, Education, Vocational Skills, Development, Employability

Introduction

Entrepreneurship education and vocational skill development have become pivotal instruments for driving inclusive growth in developing economies, particularly in Nigeria's South-South region. As the labor market continues to evolve with increasing technological and economic demands, higher education institutions are expected to produce graduates who are not only employable but also capable of creating sustainable ventures that contribute to economic inclusivity. Entrepreneurship education equips Business Education graduates with innovative thinking, problem-solving abilities, and managerial competencies necessary to initiate and sustain business ventures in competitive markets (Okoye & Nwogwugwu, 2021). On the other hand, vocational skill development provides the technical and practical proficiency required for self-reliance and job creation, aligning with national goals of reducing unemployment and poverty. Scholars also emphasize how vocational skill training drives inclusive growth. First, vocational training reduces barriers to entry by creating viable self-employment options for those excluded from formal wage jobs, particularly women, rural youth, and persons with limited formal credentials (UNESCO, 2022). Second, vocational programmes

that are gender-sensitive and locally adapted increase participation of marginalised groups, thereby broadening the benefits of growth beyond urban, formal sectors (World Bank, 2021). Third, when vocational training is integrated with entrepreneurship education teaching opportunity recognition, record-keeping, digital marketing, and basic financial management, graduates are better able to convert skills into sustainable livelihoods and small enterprises that create local jobs (Ukata, 2023). Inclusive growth emphasizes equitable participation in economic opportunities and the fair distribution of benefits across different societal groups. Through entrepreneurship and vocational education, universities play a strategic role in ensuring that graduates are equipped with both cognitive and hands-on competencies to engage productively in diverse sectors of the economy (Adebayo & Ogunlade, 2022). Business Education graduates, in particular, stand at the intersection of theory and practice, as their training encompasses business management, financial literacy, and vocational expertise. This combination fosters innovation and economic empowerment among marginalized populations, thereby promoting inclusive growth. In public universities across South-South Nigeria, entrepreneurship education has been institutionalized as a policy response to graduate unemployment and underemployment. However, the extent to which such education translates into practical vocational competence and inclusive growth outcomes remains an ongoing challenge (Ezeani & Okwuosa, 2023). A sustainable framework that integrates entrepreneurship theory with vocational skill application is therefore essential to producing Business Education graduates capable of driving inclusive economic transformation. Hence, this study investigates entrepreneurship education and vocational skill development as drivers of inclusive growth among Business Education graduates in public universities in South-South Nigeria, exploring how the fusion of theoretical knowledge and practical skills can foster equitable and sustainable economic development.

Literature Review

Entrepreneurship Education refers to the structured process of equipping individuals with the knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, and competencies required to identify business opportunities, create innovative solutions, establish new ventures, and manage existing enterprises successfully. It goes beyond teaching how to start a business by fostering entrepreneurial thinking, creativity, innovation, risk-taking, problem-solving, leadership, and self-reliance. “Entrepreneurship education aims to prepare individuals to become job creators rather than job seekers, thereby contributing to economic development, employment generation, and poverty reduction. According to Hisrich et al. (2020), entrepreneurship education is a learning process that develops entrepreneurial competencies by enabling individuals to recognise opportunities, mobilise resources, and create value through innovation and business creation. The authors emphasise that entrepreneurship education cultivates entrepreneurial behaviour that can be applied in both business and non-business settings. Similarly, entrepreneurship education is defined as a collection of formal and informal educational activities that encourage participants to develop entrepreneurial mindsets, acquire practical business knowledge, and build competencies necessary for innovation, self-employment, and sustainable economic participation. This perspective highlights entrepreneurship education as an instrument for lifelong learning and economic empowerment. According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2022), entrepreneurship education encompasses teaching methods that promote creativity, innovation, initiative, and opportunity recognition while developing learners' confidence to transform ideas into practical and sustainable ventures. The organization stresses that entrepreneurship education is relevant across all disciplines and educational levels because entrepreneurial competencies are valuable in both business and employment contexts. Furthermore, the European Commission (2016) describes entrepreneurship education as a process that enables individuals to act upon opportunities and ideas to create value for others. The framework identifies entrepreneurial competence as comprising creativity, ethical thinking, financial literacy, mobilizing resources, coping with uncertainty, and learning through experience. In the Nigerian context, entrepreneurship education was introduced into higher education to address the growing problem of graduate unemployment and promote self-employment. The National Universities Commission (2011) defines entrepreneurship education as an educational programme designed to inculcate entrepreneurial skills, attitudes, values, and competencies that empower graduates to establish and manage successful enterprises, thereby contributing to national economic growth and sustainable development. Scholars have also emphasized the developmental role of entrepreneurship education. Kuratko (2021) argues that entrepreneurship education develops opportunity recognition, innovation, leadership, resilience, and strategic thinking, which are essential for successful entrepreneurial careers. According to the author, entrepreneurship education has evolved beyond business start-up training to include the development of entrepreneurial competencies applicable across organizations and industries. Likewise, Fayolle and Gailly (2015) view entrepreneurship education as a pedagogical process aimed at influencing learners' entrepreneurial intentions, attitudes, competencies, and behaviors through experiential learning approaches

such as business simulations, mentoring, project-based learning, and business plan development. Entrepreneurship education can be conceptualized as a multidisciplinary educational process that equips learners with entrepreneurial knowledge, practical skills, innovative capabilities, and positive attitudes necessary for identifying opportunities, creating value, establishing businesses, and contributing to socio-economic development. It catalyzes innovation, wealth creation, employment generation, and national competitiveness.

Vocational Skill Development refers to the systematic process of equipping individuals with practical knowledge, technical competencies, and occupational skills required to perform specific jobs or trades effectively. It emphasizes hands-on learning, competency acquisition, and workplace readiness, enabling individuals to secure gainful employment, become self-employed, or improve their productivity in various occupations. Vocational skill development combines theoretical instruction with practical training to prepare learners for the demands of the labour market and foster sustainable economic development. According to the International Labour Organization (2023), vocational skill development is the process of providing individuals with technical, vocational, and employability skills that enhance their capacity to obtain decent work, adapt to changing labour market conditions, and contribute to economic growth. The organization emphasizes that vocational skills are essential for improving productivity, reducing unemployment, and promoting inclusive economic development. Similarly, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (2022) defines vocational skill development as the acquisition of practical knowledge, technical expertise, and occupational competencies through Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET). According to UNESCO, vocational skill development prepares learners for employment, entrepreneurship, lifelong learning, and active participation in society by integrating technical competence with transferable skills such as communication, teamwork, and problem-solving. According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2021), vocational skill development involves developing occupational competencies that enable individuals to perform efficiently in specific professions while adapting to technological changes and evolving workplace demands. The organization notes that vocational skills enhance employability, innovation, productivity, and economic competitiveness. From an educational perspective, Okorie (2001) describes vocational skill development as the process through which learners acquire practical skills, attitudes, knowledge, and work habits necessary for productive employment in recognized occupations. According to the author, vocational skill development emphasizes competency-based instruction that prepares individuals for specific careers while promoting self-reliance. Likewise, Olaitan (1996) explains that vocational skill development is concerned with training individuals to acquire marketable skills through practical experiences that enable them to perform effectively in occupations requiring specialized manual, technical, or technological competence. The author argues that vocational skills are fundamental for employment creation and national economic development. Furthermore, Billett (2011) views vocational skill development as the continuous acquisition of occupational knowledge and workplace competence through formal education, workplace learning, apprenticeships, and experiential learning. He emphasizes that effective vocational skill development requires close collaboration between educational institutions and industry to ensure that training aligns with labour market needs. In the Nigerian context, the National Board for Technical Education (2020) regards vocational skill development as a competency-based educational process designed to equip learners with employable skills, entrepreneurial capabilities, and technical expertise needed for productive employment and self-reliance. The Board stresses that vocational skill development is central to reducing youth unemployment, promoting entrepreneurship, and supporting national industrialization. Vocational skill development encompasses a wide range of competencies, including technical skills, digital literacy, communication skills, critical thinking, teamwork, creativity, occupational safety, and entrepreneurial skills. It also promotes adaptability, innovation, and lifelong learning, enabling individuals to respond effectively to technological advancements and changing workplace environments. Vocational skill development is a lifelong learning process that equips individuals with practical competencies, technical expertise, and employability skills necessary for successful participation in the labour market. It serves as a critical instrument for human capital development, poverty reduction, entrepreneurship promotion, industrial growth, and sustainable socio-economic development.

Empirical Review

Alabi (2025) investigated the Entrepreneurial Skills Acquisition and Business Education Students' Empowerment for Employability in South-South and South-East, Nigeria. Three objectives, three research questions, and three hypotheses guided the study. A descriptive survey research design was used for the study. The population of this study was 106 postgraduate students graduate from selected universities in South-South and South-East, Nigeria. The entire

population was used for the study; hence, there was no sampling. The instrument used for the study was a questionnaire titled Entrepreneurial Skills Acquisition and Business Education Students Empowerment for Employability Questionnaire (ESABESEEQ). The instrument was structured on a four-point rating scale of Very High Extent, High Extent, Low Extent, and Very Low Extent. Mean and Standard Deviation were used to answer the research questions, while the t-test was used to test the null hypotheses at the 0.05 level of significance. It was revealed that Problem-Solving Skills give an opportunity to utilize one's potential. It was recommended, among others, that The University curriculum should seek to produce graduates who are critical and creative thinkers, with real skills, those who are ready to challenge the status quo, ready to make mistakes and learn from them. Graduates who are not afraid to put forward novel ideas, listen to others, and be ready to compromise where necessary. Entrepreneurship education in universities should be adequately funded. This can be achieved through an increase in the budgetary allocation to the universities by the government. With adequate funding, universities will be able to establish entrepreneurial development centers for practical work and the provision of training/instructional material for the programme. Oboreh and Nnebe (2019) examined entrepreneurship education and skill acquisition of graduates in public universities in South-East Nigeria. The study investigated the effect of technical innovation, creativity, risk-taking, and opportunity recognition on the skill acquisition of graduates in public Universities in South-East Nigeria. The study reviewed relevant conceptual, theoretical, and empirical literature. This research work was anchored on Cognitive theory. A descriptive research design was adopted in this study. The researcher made use of primary sources of data. The population of the study was 7951. The sample of the study was 7951 respondents drawn from the eight universities, which is 10% of the students. The instrument used was a structured questionnaire. The data used in this study were generated using a 5-point Likert scale questionnaire. The researcher used face and content validity, and the reliability of the instrument used was tested using the test-retest method and Cronbach's alpha. The data generated through questionnaires were analyzed using Multiple Regression analysis. The study found out that technical innovation has a significant positive influence on the skills acquisition of graduates in Nigerian public Universities. Creativity has a significant positive effect on the skills acquisition of graduates in public Universities. Risk-taking has a positive influence on the skills acquisition of graduates in public Universities. Opportunity recognition has a significant positive effect on the skill acquisition of graduates in public universities in South-East Nigeria. The study concludes that entrepreneurship education had a significant positive influence on the skill acquisition of graduates in public universities in South-East Nigeria. The study therefore recommended, among others. Technical innovation should be emphasized, as technology is imperative. This requires a holistic linking of technology to industry through an overhaul of curricula and investment prioritization. The university curriculum should seek to produce graduates who are critical and creative thinkers, with real skills, those who are ready to challenge the status quo, ready to make mistakes and learn from them. Graduates who are not afraid to put forward novel ideas, listen to others, and be ready to compromise where necessary

Entrepreneurship education and vocational skill development have been widely recognized as essential drivers for fostering inclusive growth and reducing unemployment among university graduates in Nigeria. However, despite several policy interventions and curriculum reforms, many Business Education graduates in public universities across the South-South region continue to face difficulties in translating acquired entrepreneurial knowledge and vocational competencies into sustainable business ventures. This reflects a disconnect between what is taught in the classroom and the realities of the labor market. Researchers have noted that entrepreneurship education in Nigerian universities is often theory-based, with limited practical exposure, weak industry collaboration, and insufficient access to incubation or funding opportunities necessary for startup creation (Ogunyemi, 2021). Furthermore, vocational skill development programs are frequently underfunded, poorly equipped, and not aligned with evolving market demands, which limits their effectiveness in promoting innovation-driven and inclusive economic growth. As a result, Business Education graduates remain inadequately prepared for self-employment or productive participation in the formal economy. The gap this study intends to fill lies in empirically examining how entrepreneurship education and vocational skill development collectively influence inclusive growth among Business Education graduates in public universities in South-South Nigeria. The aim of the study was to investigate entrepreneurship education and vocational skill development as drivers of inclusive growth among business education graduates in public universities in South-South Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to;

1. examine the extent to which entrepreneurship education influences inclusive growth among Business Education graduates in public universities in South-South Nigeria.

2. assess the impact of vocational skill development on the employability and economic inclusion of Business Education graduates in public universities in South-South Nigeria.

The following questions guided the study;

1. To what extent does entrepreneurship education influence inclusive growth among Business Education graduates in public universities in South-South Nigeria?
2. How does vocational skill development impact the employability and economic inclusion of Business Education graduates in public universities in South-South Nigeria?

Based on the research objectives and questions, the following null hypotheses are formulated to guide the study:

1. There is no significant relationship between entrepreneurship education and inclusive growth among Business Education graduates in public universities in South-South Nigeria.
2. There is no significant relationship between vocational skill development and employability of Business Education graduates in public universities in South-South Nigeria.

Methodology

A descriptive research design was adopted for the study, and the study area was Public Universities in South-South Nigeria. The study population comprised 1496 Business Education final-year students in South-South Nigeria. Using the Taro Yamane formula, the sample size was 316 Business Education final-year students. Data were collected using a researcher-developed questionnaire, which was face- and content-validated by two Business Education lecturers at Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Rumuolumeni. Two instruments were used for the study: the Inclusive Growth Among Business Education Graduates Questionnaire (IGBEGQ) and the Instructional Delivery of Business Education Programmes Questionnaire (IDBEPQ). To establish the reliability of the instrument, copies of the instrument were distributed to 15 Business Education lecturers at Rivers State University, Nkpolu. Cronbach's alpha was used to analyse the instrument in the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21 to establish internal consistency. Reliability coefficients of 0.809 and 0.812 were obtained for clusters B1 and B2, respectively, with an overall coefficient of 0.78. The questionnaire had 20 items across the two clusters. The instrument was structured on a four-point rating scale, with response categories as Strongly agree = 4, Agree = 3, Disagree = 2, and Strongly disagree = 1. The researcher administered copies of the instrument to respondents in their various offices. Of 316 copies distributed, 303 were successfully retrieved and used for data analysis. The statistical tools used to answer the research questions were the arithmetic mean and standard deviation. The class boundaries for interpreting the results were: Strongly agree (3.50-4.0), Agree (2.50-3.49), Disagree (1.50-2.49), and Strongly disagree (1.00-1.49). The hypotheses were analysed using the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation (PPMC) at the 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation Scores of entrepreneurship education as it influences inclusive growth among Business Education graduates in public universities in South-South Nigeria.

S/N	Items	X ₁	SD
1.	Entrepreneurship education equips graduates with practical business management skills.	3.76	0.86
2.	Entrepreneurship education helps graduates identify business opportunities.	3.83	0.91
3.	Entrepreneurship training enhances graduates' ability to start their own businesses.	3.00	0.70
4.	Exposure to entrepreneurship education reduces unemployment among Business Education graduates	2.66	0.83
5.	Entrepreneurship education promotes gender inclusivity in the labour market	2.97	0.68
6.	Business plan development courses improve graduates' entrepreneurial readiness.	3.10	0.70
7.	Entrepreneurship education enhances graduates' contribution to national economic growth	2.72	0.84
8.	Entrepreneurship modules promote sustainable business practices among graduates.	2.99	0.78
9.	Entrepreneurship education has significantly improved graduates' access to financial empowerment opportunities.	3.72	0.84
10.	Courses on business ethics and social responsibility promote inclusive entrepreneurship	2.80	0.90
Grand mean		3.16	0.80

Source: field survey, 2025

The results indicate that entrepreneurship education has a moderately strong influence on inclusive growth among Business Education graduates in public universities in South-South Nigeria. With a mean value above the midpoint (3.00), the respondents generally agreed that entrepreneurship education fosters inclusivity by equipping graduates with the knowledge and skills necessary for self-reliance and sustainable employment. The standard deviation (0.80) shows a relatively low variation in responses, suggesting that most participants shared similar views on the positive role of entrepreneurship education in promoting inclusive growth

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation Computation of vocational skill development impact on the employability and economic inclusion of Business Education graduates in public universities in South-South Nigeria.

S/N	Items	X	SD
11	Vocational skill training improves graduates' employability in diverse sectors.	3.06	0.81
12	Vocational training promotes technical competence in Business Education graduates.	3.12	0.61
13	Skill acquisition programs reduce dependency on white-collar jobs.	3.40	0.70
14	Practical vocational training builds graduates' confidence for self-employment.	3.30	0.65
15	Skill development promotes gender and economic inclusion among graduates.	3.32	0.67
16	Hands-on vocational workshops enhance the employability of Business Education graduates.	3.3	0.45
17	Graduates with vocational skills experience less job insecurity	3.2	0.41
18	Acquisition of vocational skills supports inclusive economic growth.	3.7	0.54
19	Vocational training encourages collaboration and teamwork among graduates.	3.5	0.51
20	Vocational skill development has increased graduates' participation in micro and small-scale enterprises	3.2	0.64
Average mean and Standard deviation		3.21	0.54

Source: field work 2025

The results in Table 2 show that vocational skill development has a positive influence on the employability and economic inclusion of Business Education graduates in public universities across South-South Nigeria. With an average mean of **3.21**, most respondents agreed that vocational training enhances employability, self-reliance, and participation in small-scale enterprises. This implies that graduates who acquire practical and technical skills are better equipped for the labour market and entrepreneurship. The standard deviation of **0.54** indicates moderate consistency in respondents' opinions, suggesting a generally shared perception that vocational skills play a crucial role in reducing unemployment and fostering inclusive economic growth among Business Education graduates.

Table 3: Correlation Coefficient between entrepreneurship education and inclusive growth among Business Education graduates in public universities in South-South Nigeria.

		Entrepreneurship Education	Inclusive Growth
Entrepreneurship Education	Pearson Correlation	1	.750**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	303	303
Inclusive Growth	Pearson Correlation	.750**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	303	303

****.** Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Source: SPSS Output (2026).

The result in Table 3 indicates a strong positive correlation ($r = 0.750$) between entrepreneurship education and inclusive growth among Business Education graduates in public universities in South-South Nigeria. The p-value (.000), which is less than the 0.05 significance level, shows that the relationship is statistically significant. This means that improvements in entrepreneurship education are closely linked to higher levels of inclusive growth, suggesting that when Business Education programmes effectively incorporate entrepreneurship training, graduates are more likely to contribute to job creation, innovation, and equitable economic participation. In essence, entrepreneurship education serves as a strong driver for social and economic inclusion among graduates in the region.

Table 2: Correlation Coefficient between vocational skill development and employability of Business Education graduates in public universities in South-South Nigeria.

		Vocational Development	Skill Employability
Vocational skill development	Pearson Correlation	1	.701**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	303	303
Employability	Pearson Correlation	.701**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	303	303

****.** Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Source: SPSS Output (2026).

The result in Table 2 shows a strong positive correlation ($r = 0.701$) between vocational skill development and the employability of Business Education graduates in public universities in South-South Nigeria. The p-value (.000), being below the 0.05 significance level, confirms that the relationship is statistically significant. This implies that as vocational skill development increases, the employability of graduates also improves. In other words, graduates who acquire practical and technical skills through vocational training are more likely to secure jobs, adapt to workplace demands, and contribute meaningfully to economic growth. The finding highlights the vital role vocational skills play in bridging the gap between education and employment opportunities in the region

Discussion

The analysis shows a strong, positive relationship between entrepreneurship education and inclusive growth among Business Education graduates ($r = .75$). This indicates that where entrepreneurship education is meaningfully integrated into programmes — with practical components, opportunity recognition, and business-planning practice — graduates are more likely to create economic opportunities for themselves and others, participate in small-scale enterprise, and contribute to broader, more inclusive local economic activity. In short, effective entrepreneurship training appears to be an important driver of inclusive growth in the study context. Two recent empirical streams support this interpretation. First, large-scale and context-sensitive studies of Nigerian universities report that entrepreneurship and innovation modules increase students' entrepreneurial intent and provide skills that are directly transferable to startup creation and small-business management (Oyinlola, 2024). These studies show that when entrepreneurship teaching includes experiential learning, mentoring, and links to market actors, graduates demonstrate greater readiness to start ventures that generate jobs and income for disadvantaged groups. Second, research on the psychological mechanisms linking classroom learning to action finds that entrepreneurship education increases entrepreneurial self-efficacy, which in turn improves start-up readiness and early venture activity — a pathway that supports inclusive outcomes when combined with access to resources and networks (Adeniyi, 2023). At the same time, some scholars caution that entrepreneurship education alone is not a guaranteed route to inclusive growth. Critiques based on Nigerian evidence argue that many programmes remain overly theoretical, under-resourced, and poorly connected to finance, incubation support, and local market realities; in such cases, the observed classroom gains do not reliably translate into sustainable enterprises or broad economic inclusion (Cambridge Research, 2024). In other words, entrepreneurship education is a necessary but not sufficient condition: without practical training, industry linkages, funding channels, and enabling policy, its potential to drive inclusive growth is limited.”

The findings revealed that vocational skill development strongly and positively influences the employability and economic inclusion of Business Education graduates in public universities in South-South Nigeria. The results indicate that graduates who acquire practical vocational competencies—such as digital literacy, entrepreneurial management, and technical proficiency—are more adaptable to dynamic labour market demands and better positioned for both wage employment and self-employment opportunities. This finding suggests that vocational skill development boosts graduate employability by equipping learners with practical experience that fosters adaptability and innovation across business environments. They further emphasised that graduates who receive vocational-oriented education are more likely to establish self-sustaining ventures and contribute meaningfully to inclusive economic growth. Similarly, vocational and technical skills significantly affect employability by enhancing graduates' problem-solving abilities, productivity, and readiness for entrepreneurial ventures in Nigeria's competitive economy. Their study highlighted that developing these skills narrows the unemployment gap by integrating more skilled individuals into the economic mainstream.

However, this result contrasts with the argument that while vocational skills improve technical capabilities, they may not automatically translate into employability without complementary soft skills such as communication, teamwork, and adaptability. Many Nigerian graduates with technical competencies still struggle to secure jobs because they lack professional exposure and employability training that connects vocational learning to real labour market demands. The study concluded that vocational skill development plays a vital role in enhancing the employability and economic inclusion of Business Education graduates in public universities in South-South Nigeria. Graduates with hands-on vocational competencies adapt better to labour market needs and are better equipped to create self-employment opportunities, thereby contributing to inclusive economic growth. The findings further show that vocational training bridges the gap between theory and practice, positioning graduates as active participants in the nation's socio-economic development. However, while vocational skills strengthen employability, they must be complemented by soft skills such as communication, teamwork, and problem-solving to meet modern employers' expectations. Therefore, integrating vocational education with broader employability training and work-based experiences will not only prepare Business Education graduates for sustainable employment but also enhance their ability to contribute effectively to Nigeria's economic transformation and inclusive growth.

Recommendations

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

1. Public universities in South-South Nigeria should strengthen the Business Education curriculum by integrating more practical and industry-relevant vocational modules. This will ensure that graduates acquire hands-on competencies that enhance their employability and enable them to participate effectively in inclusive economic activities.
2. Universities should establish strong collaborations with industries, entrepreneurship hubs, and vocational training centers to provide students with real-world exposure. Such partnerships will help bridge the gap between academic learning and the practical skills required in the labour market, thereby improving the graduates' readiness for both self-employment and formal job opportunities.

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