



Socio-Economic Impacts and Challenges of Entrepreneurship Education in Public Universities in South-South Geopolitical Zone, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study investigated the socio-economic impacts and challenges of entrepreneurship education (E.E.) in public universities in Nigeria's South-South geopolitical zone. Two objectives, two research questions and two hypotheses guided the study, which adopted a descriptive survey design. The study population comprised 19 public universities in the region, with an academic staff strength of 11,400 lecturers. A sample of 1,140 lecturers (680 male and 460 female), representing 10% of the population, was drawn using stratified random sampling. Data were collected using a questionnaire titled "Socio-Economic Impacts and Challenges of Entrepreneurship Education in Public Universities in South-South Geopolitical zone of 12 Nigeria Questionnaire (S-EICEEPUSNQ)". The instrument, which contained 20 items, was satisfactorily validated, and Cronbach's alpha produced a general reliability score of 0.84. The researcher and two research assistants administered 1,140 copies, and 1,065 copies were retrieved. This gave a retrieval rate of 93%. The z-test was employed to test the hypotheses at a significance level of 0.05, while the mean, standard deviation, and rank order were employed to address the research questions. The findings revealed that the socio-economic impacts of entrepreneurship education in public universities in South-South Nigeria include, among others, fostering ethical values; promoting social responsibilities; enhancing the growth of MSMEs; increasing revenue generation; and enhancing GDP growth and effective resource utilisation. Challenges to implementing entrepreneurship education effectively in public universities in South-South Nigeria include, among others, an inadequate curriculum, pedagogical issues, corruption, insecurity, and poor funding. Based on the findings, the researcher drew a conclusion and recommended, among others, that the government ensure entrepreneurship education is adequately funded and that all necessary facilities and human resources for effective programme implementation are provided.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship Education, University, Socio-Economic, Impacts, Challenges

Introduction

Full employment is one of the major desires of most economies in the world. This is because it indicates a thriving workforce, boosts economic growth and improves standard of living. On the other hand, rising graduate unemployment is a waste of human capital. It increases poverty, social unrest, brain drain, and economic slowdown. In the past four to five decades, Nigeria has witnessed a rising rate of graduate unemployment in all fields of learning. The higher education graduate unemployment rate in Nigeria in 2023 according to National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) was 33%. This was attributed to lack of entrepreneurship skills. This figure indicates a significant challenge in the country's job market, highlighting the need for strategies to enhance employability and job creation. Part of the strategies adopted by the federal government to enhance job creation and graduate employability in Nigeria was the introduction of E.E. as a compulsory course in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. Entrepreneurship education in Nigerian Universities is aimed at combating high rate of graduate unemployment, poverty, and youth restiveness. It also aims at fostering self-reliance and practical business skills. Globally, entrepreneurship is now a crucial force of economic growth, especially in emerging nations where poverty, underemployment, and unemployment are prevalent. In Nigeria, entrepreneurship according to Medeataji and Usman (2025) is more than just launching firms, it is also being connected to more innovations, job creation, productivity improvement, and human capital development. Nigeria is a

known major oil producing country. Its economy depends heavily on proceeds from crude oil sales (World Bank, 2020). Unfortunately, Nigerian government has not been careful enough to invest the windfall profits into other critical sectors of the economy. This has promoted underdevelopment, poverty, infrastructural decay and unemployment. This situation is further compounded by instability in oil prices and the lack of sustainable development, thus necessitating the need for entrepreneurship education as means of attaining perennial economic advancement and sustainable development.

Okoye and Nwakoby (2019) view entrepreneurship as a driving force for economic development, innovation, and societal transformation. It fosters innovation, creativity, resilience, and problem-solving abilities, preparing students for self-employment or entrepreneurial roles across various contexts. Entrepreneurship education has contributed to economic growth and development by equipping individuals with skills to innovate, take risks, and create new businesses, leading to job creation and increased gross domestic product (GDP). According to Okebukola, as cited in Akpomi and Ikpesu (2020), the five fundamental importance of entrepreneurship education in higher institutions involve: strengthening Nigeria's economic advancement, cutting down poverty levels, opening up job spaces, promoting good living and quality of life, and elevating public confidence, regard, and value of Nigerian Universities. Entrepreneurship education develops innovative and creative thinking skills that enable individuals to solve economic and social problems. It fosters ethical values and social responsibility, ensuring that business activities contribute positively to wider society (Obi & Onwuegbuzie, 2019). By equipping individuals with entrepreneurial skills and competencies, entrepreneurship education helps to reduce dependency on formal wage employment, stimulates small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), and contributes to poverty alleviation (Medeataji & Usman, 2025). It also promotes economic diversification by encouraging business creation in sectors such as agriculture, information technology, manufacturing, and the creative industries. Entrepreneurship education is not limited to the classroom. It emphasises experimental and practical approaches such as business plan development, mentorship, internships, entrepreneurial competitions, innovation laboratories, and incubation centres. You can't say enough about how important entrepreneurial education and training are to a country's economic growth.

Yahya et al. (2022) list job creation, greater economic independence, reduced poverty, and improved skill sets as economic benefits of entrepreneurship education. Multiple studies have shown that MSME's, or micro, small, and medium enterprises, are the engine that keeps the Nigerian economy turning (Afolabi, 2015). More than 40 million Nigerians are employed by more than 17.5 million MSME's, according to the data. Nearly 80% of Nigeria's workforce is employed by MSMEs companies. In light of the critical and priceless roles MSMEs play in economic growth and development, it is imperative that policies befitting these organisations be developed and put into place. Many believe entrepreneurship is strongly correlated with a flourishing economy. Afolabi (2015) asserts that a correlation between an uptick in entrepreneurial activity and GDP growth is strong. An entrepreneurial spirit is crucial to a country's progress. Entrepreneurs take measured risks that drive ever-increasing economic development. To thrive as an entrepreneur in the modern era, Anabaraonye (2023) outlined five characteristics any entrepreneur must possess. Among them, you may find credibility, clarity, consistency, connectedness, and inventiveness. Ifeanacho and Ifeanacho (2014) state that entrepreneurship education is crucial because it enlightens the public, alters people's perspectives on entrepreneurship, teaches pupils about the economy, and exposes them to entrepreneurial concepts. The potential of entrepreneurship education to help people become self-sufficient and end poverty and hunger makes it a promising instrument for achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Temenge et al. (2020), stated this will boost the economy and bring down the unemployment rate. Entrepreneurial education enhances students' critical thinking, initiative, responsibility, and capacity for rapid learning. According to Kalu (2014), entrepreneurship education has several social benefits. It teaches students how to run their own businesses, how to interact with customers, how to start and grow a business, and it fosters a curiosity and desire to learn in students. It also helps staff and students strengthen or develop their entrepreneurial abilities (Osadebe et al., 2024). Afolabi (2015) found that graduates trained in entrepreneurship were more likely to start their own enterprises. Entrepreneurship education has been shown to improve entrepreneurs' management abilities, contributing to a more robust economy. Entrepreneurship education has a substantial impact on the expansion of MSMEs (Akinwale & Adepoju, 2018). Youth unemployment rates are shown to be lower in areas where entrepreneurship education is provided (World Bank, 2020).

Entrepreneurship education is expected to enhance sustainable economic growth. This is because it spurs technological development, raises people's living standards, and boosts production and output (Ohwofasa & Ajagono, 2020). As a result, it will have several positive effects on economic growth and development, including a higher overall standard

of living, fewer instances of severe poverty, less income and wealth inequality, and more profits to reinvest in expanding capacity and productivity. For entrepreneurship education to enhance Nigeria's socio-economic level, a few key resources are needed. Among these, as outlined by Ohwofasa and Ajagano (2020), are the following: improving the quality of primary and secondary education; refocusing current educational initiatives on building a sustainable economy; efficiently implementing existing programs to reduce poverty; electrifying rural areas; creating new jobs; and increasing agricultural productivity and revenue. Provision of job possibilities, efficient utilisation of resources, fair distribution of income and wealth, and ease of technology transfer and adaption are some of the advantages of entrepreneurship education that were summarised by Ogundele and Egunjini (2016). Several obstacles make it difficult for entrepreneurship education at Nigerian universities to achieve its goal of fostering social and economic development. Issues with entrepreneurship education implementation include, according to Ogedengbe et al. (2015), insufficient capacity development centers, insufficient teaching facilities, insufficient orientation of school administrators, and how to teach the subject. The following factors have made it difficult for entrepreneurship education in Nigeria to achieve its goals: corruption, public attitude toward entrepreneurship, public interest in and perception of entrepreneurship education, the classroom setting, the need for students to pass tests, dissatisfaction with one's job, and poorly formulated policies (Enyekit, & Dambo, 2017). According to Eze and Nwankwo (2016), several systemic issues have prevented entrepreneurship education from effectively reducing unemployment in Nigeria. These include: insufficient funding, insecurity, poor infrastructure, power outages, and limited or weak partnerships between universities and industries. According to Afolabi (2015), entrepreneurship education has helped Nigeria's economy grow and develop by providing more jobs for people looking for work. However, unfavourable economic conditions have prevented entrepreneurship development from boosting Nigeria's economy. Corruption and favouritism have thwarted lawmakers' attempts to encourage business ownership. Graduate unemployment and poverty rates remain high in Southern zone of Nigeria, despite attempts to boost entrepreneurial courses in public colleges. Public colleges in Nigeria's South-South geopolitical zone face several obstacles that make it difficult to implement entrepreneurship education programs, and many people are unsure of the program's potential social and economic effects. As a result, this article sets out to examine the difficulties and social and economic effects of entrepreneurship programs at Nigerian public institutions situated in Southern Nigeria. The study set out to accomplish two main goals: first, to analyse the monetary and social effects of entrepreneurship programs at Nigerian public universities; and second, to identify the obstacles to entrepreneurship programs' successful rollout in these same institutions.

Research Questions

1. What are the socio-economic impacts of entrepreneurship education in public universities in South-South geopolitical zone of Nigeria?
2. What are the challenges of effective implementation of entrepreneurship education in public universities in South- South geopolitical zone of Nigeria?

Hypotheses

1. There is no significant difference between the mean responses of male and female lecturers on socio-economic impacts of entrepreneurship education in public universities in South-South geopolitical zone of Nigeria.
2. There is no significant difference between the mean responses of male and female lecturers on the challenges of effective implementation of entrepreneurship education in public universities in South- South geopolitical zone of Nigeria.

Methodology

The investigation used a descriptive survey design. The total sample comprised nineteen (19) government institutions in the region, with a total academic staff strength of 11,400 members (6,800 male and 4,600 female). Source: 2025 report from the Academic Planning Units of the 19 universities. The study used stratified random sampling to select 1,140 academic personnel, including 680 male and 460 female members. This sample size accounted for 10% of the study's total population. Data collection was conducted using the "Socio-economic Impacts and Challenges of Entrepreneurship Education in Public Universities in South-South Geopolitical Zone of Nigeria Questionnaire (SEICEEPUSSNQ)." Three experienced teachers (two from the Educational Management Department and one from the Measurement and Evaluation Department) validated the instrument, which consisted of 20 items and used a four-point Likert rating scale. The researchers used Cronbach's alpha to establish a reliability index of 0.84 for the instrument. The researcher and two research assistants administered 1,140 copies of the questionnaire, and they

retrieved 1,065. This gave a 93% retrieval rate. Mean scores, standard deviation, and rank order were used to answer the research questions, while a z-test was used to test the hypotheses at a 0.05 level of significance. A criterion mean of 2.50 served as the decision rule. The study area is the South-South geopolitical zone of Nigeria. The area includes six states and nineteen public universities.

Results

Table 1: Mean scores, standard deviation and rank order analysis of the responses of male and female lecturers on the socio-economic impacts of entrepreneurship education in public universities in South-South Nigeria.

S/N Items	Male Lecturers (N=620)		Female Lecturers (N=445)		Mean Set	Rank Order	Remarks
	$\bar{x}$	SD	$\bar{x}$	SD			
1. Entrepreneurship education fosters ethical values.	3.02	0.67	2.92	0.64	2.97	10th	Agree
2. It promotes social responsibility by ensuring that business entities contribute to the development of their host community.	3.16	0.59	3.1	0.61	3.13	8th	Agree
3. It stimulates the growth of MSMEs for job creation.	3.2	0.56	3.14	0.58	3.17	4th	Agree
4. It enhances diversification of the economy through business creation in various sectors.	3.18	0.57	3.12	0.6	3.15	6th	Agree
5. It promotes revenue generation.	3.06	0.63	3.08	0.62	3.07	9th	Agree
6. It promotes the growth of GDP as well as effective resource utilization.	3.17	0.57	3.15	0.58	3.16	5th	Agree
7. It enhances poverty alleviation.	3.24	0.52	3.2	0.55	3.22	2nd	Agree
8. It facilitates technology transfer/adaptation.	3.14	0.6	3.16	0.57	3.15	6th	Agree
9. It boosts entrepreneurship skills and management competencies of people.	3.22	0.53	3.18	0.56	3.2	3rd	Agree
10. It enhances per capita income/standard of living of the people.	3.24	0.52	3.22	0.54	3.23	1st	Agree
Grand Mean / Standard Deviation	3.16	0.58	3.13	0.59			

Criterion mean = 2.50

Table 1 shows that the weighted mean scores for all items, ranked from 1st to 10th, were greater than the criterion mean of 2.50, ranging from 2.97 to 3.23. They were acknowledged as the socio-economic consequences of entrepreneurship education in government universities in South-South, Nigeria. The aggregate mean of 3.16 and 3.13 for male and female lecturers, respectively, exceeds the criterion mean, indicating that lecturers shared a perspective on the socio-economic consequences of entrepreneurship education. Therefore, the socio-economic impacts of entrepreneurship education in public universities in South-South, Nigeria include: fostering of ethical values; promotion of social responsibilities; stimulation of the growth of MSMEs; Promotion of diversification of the economy; increasing revenue generation; enhances the growth of GDP/Effective resource utilization; it promotes poverty alleviation; it facilitates technology transfer/ adaptation; it boosts entrepreneurial skills and management competencies; and it increases per capita income/standard of living of the people.

Table 2: Mean scores, standard deviation and rank order analysis of the responses of male and female lecturers on the challenges of effective

Items	Male Lecturers (N=620)		Female Lecturers (N=445)		Mean Set	Rank Order	Remarks
	$\bar{x}$	SD	$\bar{x}$	SD			
Inadequate entrepreneurship education curriculum	3.16	0.75	3.20	0.75	3.18	5th	Agree
Pedagogical issues	3.08	0.80	3.06	0.82	3.07	9th	Agree
Corruption	3.12	0.78	3.14	0.79	3.13	7th	Agree
Weak policy frameworks	3.14	0.77	3.10	0.80	3.12	8th	Agree
Inadequate funding	3.28	0.70	3.18	0.76	3.23	2nd	Agree
Insecurity	3.00	0.82	3.04	0.84	3.02	10th	Agree
Inadequate infrastructure	3.20	0.73	3.24	0.73	3.22	4th	Agree
Inadequate power supply	3.24	0.72	3.22	0.74	3.23	2nd	Agree
Weak university/industries collaboration	3.18	0.74	3.16	0.78	3.17	6th	Agree
Lack of start-up capital for university graduates to start their businesses.	3.30	0.69	3.26	0.71	3.28	1st	Agree
Grand Mean / Standard Deviation	3.17	0.75	3.16	0.77			

Criterion mean = 2.50

The weighted mean set scores for items ranked 1–10 in Table 2 ranged from 3.02 to 3.28, all higher than the criterion mean of 2.50. Respondents acknowledged problems with entrepreneurship education at public institutions in South-South Nigeria as obstacles to its successful implementation. The male and female professors in South-South Nigeria had fairly similar views on the difficulties of successfully implementing entrepreneurship instruction, as shown by their aggregate means of 3.17 and 3.16, respectively. Therefore, problems of adequate implementation of entrepreneurship education in public universities in the South-South zone include: undetailed curriculum; pedagogical factors; corruption; weak policy framework; inadequate funding; insecurity; inadequate infrastructure; inadequate power supply; weak university/industry collaboration; and lack of start-up capital for university graduates to start their businesses.

Test of Hypotheses

Table 3: Summary of z-test on difference between the mean responses of male and female lecturers on the socio-economic impacts of entrepreneurship education in public universities in South-South geopolitical zone of Nigeria

Gender	N	$\bar{x}$	SD	Df	z-cal.	z-crit.	Decision
Male Lecturers	620	3.16	0.58	1063	0.824	1.960	Not significant
Female Lecturers	445	3.13	0.59				

Table 3 shows that, on average, male professors scored 3.16 and female lecturers scored 3.13. These mean scores are quite similar and do not differ much. Also, the z-table or critical value of +1.960 is far higher than the computed z-score of 0.824 at 1063 degrees of freedom and a 0.05 level of significance. Since the researcher found no evidence to support the alternative hypothesis, she or he concludes that male and female professors at public universities in Nigeria's South-South geopolitical zone do not differ significantly in their assessments of the social and economic effects of entrepreneurship programs.

Table 4: z-test analysis of difference between the mean responses of male and female lecturers on the challenges of effective implementation of entrepreneurship education in public universities in South-South geopolitical zone of Nigeria.

Gender	N	$\bar{x}$	SD	Df	z-cal.	z-crit.	Decision
Male Lecturers	620	3.17	0.75	1063	0.211	1.960	Not significant
Female Lecturers	445	3.16	0.77				

The mean replies of male professors were 3.17 and 3.16, respectively, as shown in Table 4. These average scores did not differ much and appeared somewhat related. In addition, with 1063 degrees of freedom and a significance threshold of 0.05, the computed z-score of 0.211 is much lower than the critical value or z-table, which is 1.960. Therefore, the researcher did not find evidence to reject the null hypothesis and maintains that male and female professors in South-South Nigerian public institutions do not significantly vary in their mean scores on the difficulties of effectively implementing entrepreneurship teaching.

Discussion

The study found that the socio-economic impacts of entrepreneurship education in public universities in South-South, Nigeria include fostering ethical values, promoting social responsibility, enhancing the growth of MSMEs, promoting economic diversification, and enhancing revenue generation. These findings are supported by Obi and Onwuegbuzie (2019); Medeataji and Usman (2025); Afolabi (2015); and Yahya et al. (2022). Entrepreneurship education has increased awareness of self-reliance due to the limited availability of white-collar jobs. Many university graduates now enter businesses such as transport, trading, agriculture, manufacturing, tailoring, baking, phone repairs, etc. These activities have expanded the number of MSMEs, created more employment opportunities, increased revenue generation, and boosted GDP growth. Entrepreneurship education has also instilled ethical values and attitudes of social responsibility relevant to successful entrepreneurship among university graduates. To succeed in business, entrepreneurs need to be honest, dedicated to their business, and transparent. Anabaraonye (2023), supporting this view, stated that every entrepreneur in the 21st century needs the following qualities, in addition, in order to become successful: creativity, connectivity, consistency, clarity, and credibility. They need to enhance the growth of their host communities.

The study also found that public university entrepreneurship programmes in South-South Nigeria have positive social and economic impacts, including increased GDP growth, more efficient use of resources, reduced poverty, facilitated technology transfer, higher standards of living and per capita income, and improved managerial and entrepreneurial abilities among students and faculty. Research from many sources supports these findings, including Ohwofasa and Ajagbon (2020), Temenge et al. (2020), Okoye and Nwakoby (2019), and Yahya, Bala and Girei (2022). Expanding MSMEs boosts the output of a wide range of products and services. It also improves the use of available human and material resources. All these have positive impacts on poverty alleviation because they create more employment opportunities, enhance per capita income, and improve the standard of living through increased productive capacity. Entrepreneurship education in government-owned universities has promoted technology adoption and transfer in various ways. It has increased creativity and critical thinking about how to solve certain problems, leading to growing entrepreneurial skills and competences that promote economic growth and development. According to the study's findings, public universities in South-South Nigeria face several obstacles to entrepreneurship education. These include limited resources, poor power supply, an inadequate curriculum, pedagogical issues, corruption, a weak policy framework, inadequate funding, insecurity, and a lack of start-up capital for university graduates. These findings are supported by Ogedengbe et al. (2015); Eze and Nwankwo (2016); and Afolabi (2015), who report that public tertiary institutions in southern Nigeria face many challenges, despite the programme's good intention and vision.

The entrepreneurship education curriculum in public universities in South-South appears poorly structured. It appears to place more emphasis on theory than on practicals, and all students, regardless of discipline, are exposed to the same entrepreneurship education curriculum. Entrepreneurship education needs to account for the technical variations across courses and disciplines. Pedagogical handicaps also affect entrepreneurship education because of a lack of qualified teachers in this area. Many lecturers teaching entrepreneurship education in public universities are not well trained. They are drawn from social and management sciences with little or no professional training in education. Poor funding is another serious issue limiting effective entrepreneurship education teaching in public universities in the zone. Effective implementation of any educational programme requires adequate funding. This will facilitate the procurement of various resources necessary for functional entrepreneurship education. Entrepreneurship education is taught without adequate instructional materials in most public higher institutions in Nigeria. This situation is worsened by corrupt practices among public university leaders. Many are involved in the mismanagement and misappropriation of funds, and sometimes they are not punished because of weak policy frameworks. Insecurity is a serious issue affecting socio-economic development in Nigeria. Human and material resources are no longer safe in Nigeria, and no credible education can occur in such an environment. Power supply is inadequate and unreliable, which has raised the cost of doing business in Nigeria because generators are expensive to run. Finally, most university graduates have no guarantee of start-up capital. Many are from very poor homes, where it is difficult to raise enough money to help graduates start an enterprise or become self-employed. These factors affect the effectiveness of entrepreneurship education in public universities in the South-South geopolitical zone of Nigeria.

Conclusion

The study has examined the socio-economic impacts and challenges of entrepreneurship education in public universities in the South-South geopolitical zone of Nigeria. An effective entrepreneurship education program at the university level, no doubt, has great socio-economic potentials. It could be regarded as the panacea to most of our socio-economic challenges. The paper therefore concludes that E.E. in public universities should be made more effective in order to enhance its socio-economic impacts in South-South, Nigeria. This would require genuine efforts by the government to address the various problems hindering the effective implementation of E.E. in public universities in the South-South geopolitical zone.

Recommendations

From the findings, the study recommended that;

1. University authorities and other stakeholders in university education should ensure that training programs in all the faculties are made relevant to provide entrepreneurial skills to all their students.
2. Government should ensure that entrepreneurship education is adequately funded and all the necessary facilities and human resources for effective implementation of the program are adequately provided.
3. Financial, technical and moral support should be provided to university graduates who are going into entrepreneurial practice by government.

4. Government should provide enabling environment for entrepreneurial practice through adequate policy frameworks and fixing of basic infrastructural deficits.

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