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Integrating Innovative Instructional Approaches in Business Education Curriculum for Students' Skill Enhancement in Universities in South-South, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study investigated the extent of integrating of innovative approaches in Business Education curriculum for students' skill enhancement in universities in south-south Nigeria. This study as descriptive survey adopted had 316 students or sample size as obtained from Taro Yamane formula out of the population of 1496 final year business education students from the twelve (12) public business education universities in South-South Nigeria running business education programme in the universities. Two objectives, research questions as well as hypotheses were stated, answered and tested at 0.05 level of significance. The data collections were carried out using a structured questionnaire titled: Integrating Innovative Approaches in Business Education Curriculum for Students' Skill Enhancement Questionnaire (IIABECSSEQ) that was validated by three experts of the Department of Business Education and Guidance and Counseling for face and content validation. The reliability of the instrument was obtained using Pearson Product Moment correlation (PPMC) and the obtained reliability is 0.92 respectively. The research questions were answered by Descriptive Statistics- Mean and Descriptive Statistics- Standard Deviation, while statistical tests of the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance employed are: Independent t-test. The findings of this study show that the skill specific module approach and the industry immersion program approach in Business Education curriculum in Universities in south-south Nigeria promotes the skill to a high level. In addition, there is a significant difference in the mean responses of male and female business education students on extent to which skill-specific module approach and industry immersion program approach in business education curriculum enhances students' skill in universities in south-south, Nigeria. It was recommended among others, that business education curriculum be reviewed and extended so that students will have various needed skills for their self-reliance after their schooling.

Keywords: Integrating Innovative Instructional, Approaches, Business Education, Curriculum and Skill Enhancement.

Introduction

Technology, new market dynamics, and the culture of the younger generations are some of the forces that are causing the world to change in various ways. One of the primary drivers of change is technology, particularly Internet-based platforms. Tablets and smartphones are examples of devices that were once thought to be unthinkable or only seen in science fiction films but are now commonplace. Clayton and Henry (2021) assert in their seminal work "The Innovative University" that online learning is transforming traditional higher education as a classic disruptive innovation. According to Cook and Grant-Davie (2016), the integration of online and classroom instruction with an emphasis on student needs is enhancing learning outcomes and satisfying the needs of nontraditional, tech-savvy students. Once more, there are peculiar market dynamics and supplier, customer, and competitor cooperation. Today's marketplaces are being shaped and altered by ideas such as the responsibility revolution (Hollender & Green, 2019), collaborative consumption (Botsman & Rogers, 2019), and crowd sourcing (Jeff, 2016). These days, instead of professionals, large groups of regular people create the content, as shown on YouTube.

Despite raising prices, retail corporations force their suppliers to provide environmentally friendly products in an effort to be more

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responsible in every manner. People are trading commodities, apartments, books, bikes, and cars under the concept of collaborative consumption. Examples that illustrate the shift in market dynamics include free e-books on the market and podcasts featuring renowned university instructors. It enhances passive information consumers, such as television generations; they are the Internet and Facebook active generations (Sheahan, 2015). Therefore, it is preferable to modify Facebook, blogs, and other comparable websites and applications on the Internet to the courses in order to engage people. Higher education institutions' approaches to business education have begun to shift in response to these trends. Using classroom activities and internet technologies, educators are searching for innovative ways to teach (Resnick & Scott, 2022). Scholars generally agree that education is essential to both individual and society growth. Thus, it is viewed as a means of giving students the information, abilities, and mindset they need to develop personally and adapt to the demands of a changing world. Education is a development and sustainability catalyst, according to Olori & Olori (2018). This implies that gaining knowledge makes a person more helpful, familiar with the abilities required to be functional, and in a position to advance society. Therefore, the core of business education is its ability to serve as a tool for personal development, among other purposes. The development of skills for individual and societal growth is the main focus of this education. A functional education curriculum, business education equips students with the knowledge, abilities, attitudes, and values necessary to succeed in the workplace. Being functional entails that the person uses the abilities they have learnt to fulfil a variety of demands. By encouraging people to participate in their society, this education also helps the country's economy.

The world's ongoing technological advancements have demonstrated that the future is uncertain, particularly when it comes to technology, education, and skills and competencies—all of which are seen as the cornerstones of social, political, and economic development. Roma (2016) provided support for this claim by stating that nations with highly educated populace are ideal for information-based technology. Through education, people can gain valuable knowledge and skills that can help them both personally and in their community. Education is a lifelong process. According to the definitions given above, education is the process by which people get the abilities, information, attitudes, and values needed to meet life's problems and make their fair share of contributions to the advancement of the country. Business education, according to the Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN) (2016), is a component of education that results in the development of practical skills, attitudes, and fundamental scientific knowledge, all of which are ingrained in the overall aims and objectives of vocational education. These goals are as follows: supplying skilled labour in applied science, technology, and business, especially in craft and technical fields; offering technical expertise and vocational skills required for agricultural, economic, and commercial development; and providing

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training in the skills individuals need for stability and economic self-reliance. Additionally, enabling young people to start their own businesses requires that they acquire the necessary skills through education and training (Uloko & Ejinkonye, 2019).

The development of talents indicates the existence of multiple areas of need that the person has to address in order to reduce unemployment. The development of skills for successful work is unquestionably at the heart of business education curricula. Due to its emphasis on marketing, accounting, management, and secretarial skills, business education in Nigeria serves as a prelude to graduates' self-employment. Sadly, the situation has flipped recently, with the majority of business school grads among other graduates unemployed. Thus, it becomes indisputable that the business education curriculum needs to be redesigned to incorporate cutting-edge methods for improving students' skill acquisition requirements for appropriate functioning in the labour market. It also demonstrates that the calibre of the curriculum has a significant impact on how well graduates of business schools are able to satisfy the demands of the contemporary competitive environment.

A curriculum is a statement of policy regarding education that outlines how the policy is to be implemented through a course of action (Yusuf, 2020). It is a strategy; an organized collection of learning goals focused on outcomes and principles. A curriculum is a written document that includes the subject matter, learning experiences, evaluation, goals, and objectives of a specific course of study. Therefore, it should come as no surprise that the business education program's curriculum is based on the idea that gives students employable skills. By offering these cutting-edge methods, business school graduates are prepared to accept positions that are easily accessible or to fit in with the global labour market. The curriculum must be updated to include the most recent subjects in order to give graduates the information, abilities, and mindset that will enable them to find employment in the global economy. According to Olori and Olori (2018), a functional business education curriculum encourages the incorporation of creative methods like: Project-Based Learning (PBL): An activity in which students collaborate to find solutions to actual business issues.

This method fosters critical thinking, problem-solving, and teamwork abilities by enabling students to apply academic concepts in real-world situations; The creation of skill-specific courses that concentrate on topics like financial modelling, digital marketing, data analysis, or negotiating strategies. These modules offer focused instruction to build particular skills that employers highly value; Programs that allow students to obtain practical experience through internships, externships, or industry-sponsored projects are known as industry immersion programs.

Innovative Approaches in Business Education Curriculum and the Enhancement of Students' Skill

After completing the business education program, graduates are expected to be appropriate and productive members of the workforce. According to a study by Okon et al.

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(2016), business education curriculum content has a beneficial effect on reducing unemployment. Additionally, enabling young people to start their own businesses requires that they acquire the necessary skills through education and training (Uloko & Ejinkonye, 2019). The development of talents indicates the existence of multiple areas of need that the person has to address in order to reduce unemployment. According to the study by Chinedu and Olabiyi (2015), among the business skills needed to empower Nigerian young were management skills, marketing kills, technical skills, analytical skills, etc. A business education curriculum, according to Nwankwo and Obuah (2021), is a planned series of formal courses as well as other activities and learning experiences that a student pursues in an effort to meet specific educational goals. The degree to which a business education program equips students with the skills they need to successfully enter and thrive in the workforce is what is seen as success.

According to Agwu (2018), a business education curriculum gives students the skills they need to succeed in the field of business education as well as the skills they need to work in industries and as independent contractors. The aforementioned studies might not have been unrelated to the creation of a quality curriculum, which ought to incorporate modern methods into its subject matter. The curriculum for business education is therefore focused on helping students develop the skills necessary for productive employment. It is noteworthy to mention that this curriculum, with its emphasis on marketing, accounting, management, and secretarial alternatives, prepares graduates for self-employment in Nigeria. Sadly, the situation has flipped recently, with the majority of business school grads among other graduates unemployed. According to this study, unemployment occurs when persons who are able and eager to work cannot find acceptable employment. According to the National Bureau of Statistics' 2017 report, the percentage of youngsters without jobs as of the third quarter of 2022 varied between 14% and 18.96%. The National Planning Commission (2015) claimed that empowering Nigerians to create wealth, jobs, reduce poverty, and reorient their values is a key component of a strategic macroeconomic framework because of the appalling state of the country's youth.

This claim by the National Planning Commission makes it clear that business education curricula need to be updated to reflect the present labour market trends. It also demonstrates that the calibre of the curriculum has a significant impact on how well graduates of business schools are able to satisfy the demands of the contemporary competitive environment. It is therefore relevant to include courses in the business education curriculum that would prepare the students for profitable skills to thrive in the workplace, since the curriculum gives students the necessary skills to succeed in their entrepreneurial endeavours and to develop their entrepreneurial venture in order to succeed and also develop their soft skills. In today's dynamic and fast-paced world, business education that emphasises innovation is a crucial starting point for enhancing community involvement in local

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economic development. The goal of this strategy is to promote business education that is centred on innovation. an atmosphere that fosters innovation, teamwork, and problem-solving abilities, ultimately generating people who can significantly advance their local economies. The first suggested approach promotes incorporating innovation and technology into business education curricula. In order to improve student engagement and enable wider access to learning resources, this strategy places a strong emphasis on utilising the most recent technological advancements, including mobile applications, e-learning platforms, and virtual business simulations (Ausat, 2022). Business education can generate graduates who are more equipped to handle the increasingly complex demands of the global market by successfully integrating these technologies.

It's also critical to highlight that a key component of this strategy is cooperation between government, business, and higher education institutions. In order to provide students with skills that are both current and relevant to the needs and dynamics of the ever-evolving local markets, collaborative efforts guarantee that business education programs are built collaboratively with input from industry stakeholders. Strong partnerships between academic institutions, businesses, and governments provide a solid basis for the creation of business education programs that are flexible and responsive to shifts in the economy (Ankrah & Al-Tabbaa, 2015). Furthermore, it is crucial to stress that innovation-oriented business education promotes hands-on learning through a variety of approaches, including internships, group projects, and business education programs, in addition to formal curricula (Lackéus, 2020). These procedures give students practical experience applying the theoretical ideas they have learnt to actual situations. As a result, individuals can strengthen both their industry-relevant practical skills and theoretical knowledge.

Students that take part in these kinds of activities can also develop strong professional networks, which are invaluable when they enter a competitive job market. This approach places equal emphasis on raising corporate social responsibility and awareness. corporate education has the power to develop leaders who care about the well-being of society and their immediate surroundings by implementing courses that emphasise sustainability, ethical corporate practices, and good social effect. This method gives students a thorough awareness of the social and environmental effects of business actions in addition to preparing them to be financially successful professionals.

Thus, in an increasingly complicated global context, business education provides a platform for the development of responsible and sustainable leadership in addition to being a method of acquiring superior business skills (Harahap et al., 2023). By utilising elements of creativity, teamwork, and social responsibility, a business education approach based on the idea of innovation tries to develop people as change agents who propel local economic progress in addition to producing skilled professionals. This strategy emphasises how important business education is in

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determining the course of inclusive and sustainable economic growth for local and global populations. Additionally, business education has the potential to become a major driver of positive change on a larger scale, not only in economic aspects but also in fostering social well-being and environmental sustainability, by incorporating values like sustainability and inclusivity into the curriculum (Fekih et al., 2021). In this regard, innovation-focused business education engages the community directly in the learning process while also bolstering active community participation in boosting the local economy. This can be accomplished through a number of initiatives, including hosting industry seminars, engaging local business professionals to appear as guest speakers, and assisting students, the institution, and local business stakeholders in joint projects (Dwivedi et al., 2023). As a result, the community not only receives education but also actively participates in choosing the curriculum's direction, offering real-world viewpoints, and developing employment prospects that meet the demands of the regional labour market.

This method facilitates the development of an education ecosystem that is responsive and has a beneficial effect on local economic growth, fosters sustainable collaboration, and fortifies the bond between education and the business sector. Additionally, innovation-driven business education fosters an entrepreneurial spirit in the local community in addition to enhancing individual creativity. Business education contributes to the development of communities as proactive and independent agents of economic change by promoting learning that supports the investigation of novel concepts, the creation of inventive goods and services, and the provision of mentorship for individuals interested in launching enterprises (Prastyaningtyas et al., 2023). Through these programs, business education encourages people to use their imagination to come up with solutions for regional economic problems while also bridging the gap between theory and practice. As a result, business education serves as a catalyst for changing how society views its role in attaining sustainable economic growth in addition to serving as a means of disseminating knowledge and skills.

It's also critical to remember that a key component of this strategy is the integration of business education with community development initiatives. Innovation-based business education has the ability to assist a variety of sustainable local economic projects by fostering stronger linkages between local commercial entities, civil society organisations, and higher education institutions. Local product development, sustainable tourism promotion, and the expansion of creative industries zones are some of these projects. Business education can serve as a catalyst in this situation by bringing people together, boosting the local economy, generating employment, and promoting equitable and sustainable economic progress. In order to accomplish sustainable development goals, business education thus serves as a change agent that forges connections between academia, the corporate sector, and civil society in addition to bridging

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the gap between theory and practice (Christ & Burritt, 2019).

An innovation-based approach to business education places a strong emphasis on the value of interdisciplinary cooperation in tackling regional economic issues. In a larger sense, a business education strategy that emphasises innovation provides a comprehensive and long-lasting means of promoting community involvement in the growth of the local economy. Business education becomes a tool for improving individual abilities as well as a strong basis for equitable and sustainable economic growth at the local level by fortifying the bonds between educational institutions, the industrial sector, and the community. Students can integrate theory and practice in contexts relevant to local market demands thanks to this approach, which fosters a strong synergy between academic learning and real-world needs. Therefore, business education contributes to the development of leaders who can spearhead constructive change in a changing economic environment in addition to producing graduates with technical expertise.

Immersion programs provide networking, realistic experiences in business and information on best practices and trends in the field. Nigeria's educational ideology is based on the national goals. The following are particularly important for business education: mental training whereby the acquisition of appropriate mental, physical skills, abilities and competences teach the individual how to live and contribute to the development of his society (NPE, 2016). This is supported by Zarifis (2020), who claims that meeting the ever-evolving demands of the labour market is one of the goals of Vocational Education and Training (VET). The purpose of business education, which forms a major part of vocational education, is to produce competent graduates both to meet the growing needs of society and to prepare for industry. Collaboration between the business community and business education is one approach to accomplish these admirable goals. There are two reasons for this: One, a close connection between business communities and business education can provide opportunity to students to practically implement what they have learned in the classroom. Two, the relationship between the business community and the business education sector can bring about an improvement in the talents and skills required for business. This is expected to influence employment opportunities for business education graduates to make significant contribution to the growth of our country's economy through such an industrial cooperative plan. The idea that the methods used to provide business education content to its receivers play a major role in the development of successful human capital is implied in the following. The New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD, 2023) believes that the use of modern technologies promotes significantly all educational courses. It validates the need for technology to provide effective and efficient delivery of business education to actualise the national goal of empowering people to serve themselves and the society. Incorporating these materials is

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always thought of as one way to improve business education students' skill acquisition requirements in order to satisfy the demands of the global labour market. Institutions can better meet students' skill acquisition demands and equip them for success in the cutthroat business world of today by incorporating these cutting-edge methods into the business education curriculum.

Umunnah (2018) defines skill as the acquired capacity to carry out an action with predetermined outcomes and good execution, frequently in a set amount of time, energy, or both. According to the Merriam Webster Dictionary (2021), a skill is the capacity to use one's knowledge in a practical and efficient manner during performance or execution. It is also referred to as dexterity or coordination, particularly while doing learnt physical activities. In a similar vein, Umunnah (2018) defines a skill as the ability to achieve a goal with the highest degree of confidence and the least amount of time and effort. Development, on the other hand, is the process of developing into something or someone that is bigger, stronger, more impressive, successful, or more advanced (Microsoft Encarta Premium Dictionary, 2021). Beyond the technical knowledge and skills required to carry out the duties that are part of one's profession, career skills are the abilities one should possess to manage one's career and do a certain job. Simply said, career skills are the culmination of one's experiences, knowledge, and abilities. Success in making decisions, influencing others, and completing tasks effectively is determined by one's skills. It will guarantee that one can negotiate their pay, land the desired work, and be ready for the future. Therefore, skill development is the process of enabling someone to acquire the capacity to perform effectively through experience or skill development.

An aspect of the vocational education is education for and about business. Okoye and Umezuluike (2018) considered business education a field of study geared towards preparing students for jobs that require specific training. Business education should enable students to develop the skills and knowledge needed to launch their own businesses rather than seek white collar jobs. Business education is a very critical part of youth preparation for life as presented by Azuka and Nwosu (2018). Igwe (2017) defines business education as one of variants of vocational education, which aims at providing business knowledge, competencies, attitude and general skills which are required for living, working and enjoying the present. In addition, Akaeze (2018) defined business education as giving its graduates innovative skills that will help them to become successful businessmen. From the perspective of Pac Ordu and Musa (2019), business education is understood as a part of education in general which aims at giving the person an education in the acquisition of knowledge, skills, comprehension and attitude that is useful for business.

According to the National Open University of Nigeria (2017), business education is a type of vocational education that gives students the theoretical knowledge and skills they need to succeed in the business world, whether they want to work for themselves or as employees.

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Business education is concerned with the development of skills, competencies, knowledge, attitude, and creativity for individual adjustment in society as an employer, employee, producer, or consumer of goods and services, as can be seen from the different definitions of business education listed above. Producing capable, skilled, and energetic businessmen and women who can effectively compete in the workplace is the main objective of business education. Programs for business education must adopt new teaching techniques in order to keep up with 21st-century teaching methods. Globalisation, rapid technology advancement, and significant demographic changes now necessitate a movement in educational systems towards a more contemporary and creative educational model. The teaching and learning process has undoubtedly improved as a result of technology advancements. Innovative learning practices can help pupils strengthen their cognitive abilities and creative thoughts. In addition to enhancing the educational system, new approaches help pupils accomplish various objectives. Growth and prosperity in the economy and society are fuelled by innovation. Alongside the growth of educational systems, innovation has become essential to bringing about qualitative changes in the field.

The use of innovation improves the productivities and quality and equality of learning opportunities. Students are introduced into various stimuli rich experiences in an innovative manners and approach to learn by doing. Education is the lamp that aids the human race in achieving success. The task of education does not just mean making pupils literate but to impart the knowledge so that they can make choices for good for themselves and others. In the 21st century, the use of innovative instructional techniques in response to the increased role of technology in teaching-learning that are also appropriate makes students' learning more interesting and realistic (Akinyele et al., 2017). According to Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (2015), innovative education strategies will augment the effectiveness of the skills education approach, as innovations rely on individuals who are equipped with knowledge and skills to develop innovative ideas and technologies, market them and apply them in the workplace and have the ability to respond flexibly to structural changes in society. These strategies span access and participation to the digital economy, sound and open and competitive business environment, sustained public investment in efficient system of knowledge creation and diffusion and sound governance and implementation strategies. Some of the creative teaching and learning strategies listed below were suggested by Revathi et al. (2019): Use of ICT in teaching, Use of web communication before, during and after class, Analysing and thinking critically, based on activity and experience, Use of smart boards, Use of reusable learning materials and digital technologies, Cooperative learning, Experimental approaches to classroom design, Research-based learning, Make use of the opportunity to produce positive discussion about objects. Likewise, Jayashree (2017) explained that to make the students' and

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instructors' media literate, teachers have to make use of more creative methods, especially on the use of multimedia. A concept of the material is first discussed in the Z to A technique, so that teachers can also make use of Z to A to aroise students' interest in the concept. This approach helps create lifelong memories or a conceptual link. Collaborative teaching (CT) or cooperative (COOP) teaching and team teaching are considered innovative teaching methods in which teachers work together to support, instruct and train student groups.

Statement of the Problem

Any society's primary tool for technical improvement, economic prosperity, and transformation is education. A closer look, however, revealed that the majority of universities in south-south Nigeria are falling behind in implementing new methods in their business education curricula. These methods include skill-specific modules, and industry immersion programmes, for students to improve their skills. However, business education is the kind of education that equips students with the information management and advanced office technology knowledge, abilities, and attitudes. The researcher has long noted the concerning inadequacy of the education provided in postsecondary institutions, particularly in the business education programs, in preparing students and graduates for real-world scenarios. Many Nigerian graduates have been impacted by this circumstance, particularly those who completed business education programs and have been unable to work for themselves or secure positions in respectable organisations in the nation. Additionally, ineptitude that may be linked to teaching methods and the shoddy curriculum employed in educational institutions caused graduates of business education programs to be unable to find jobs in a variety of corporate entities and organisations. Inadequate handling of the aforementioned circumstances will further render business education students unskilled and unemployed upon graduation. Given this context, the researcher felt it was essential to conduct this study on the incorporation of new ideas into business education curricula in order to improve students' skills in universities located in southern Nigeria

Purpose of the Study

This study investigates the extent to which the integrating of innovative approaches in business education curriculum for students' skill enhancement in universities in south-south Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to investigates the:

1. extent to which skill-specific module approach enhances business education students' skill in universities in South-South, Nigeria.
2. extent to which Industry Immersion Program approach enhances business education students' skill in universities in South-South, Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study

1) To what extent does skill-specific modules approach enhance business education students' skill in universities in South-South, Nigeria?

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2) To what extent does industry immersion approach enhance business education students' skill in universities in South-South, Nigeria?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance

1. There is no significance different in the mean responses of male and female business education students on extent to which integration of skill-specific module approach in business education curriculum enhances students' skill in universities in South-South, Nigeria.
2. There is no significance different in the mean responses of male and female business education students on extent to which integration of Industry Immersion Program approach in business education curriculum enhances students' skill in universities in South-South, Nigeria

Methods

A descriptive-survey type research design was used. The descriptive survey design involves the description and documentation of what is or is not present or what happens or does not happen regarding the phenomenon being investigated without any manipulation of what triggered the event (Udeze 2015). It develops a profile on what is and not why it is so. It is considered appropriate for the study because it is based on the views, opinions of respondents as well as resources available in the area of study.

Study population was 1,496 (final year) Business Education students of public universities in South-South Nigeria. A sample of 316 final year Business Education Students was obtained in the above listed institutions in South-South Nigeria for the study. The number of samples were based on the Taro Yamane (1967) formula.Structured questionnaire named Innovative Instructional Approaches in Business Education Curriculum Questionnaire (IIABECQ) was applied as a means to obtain the data. The instrument containing 15 items was divided into two sections which was designed to elicit responses from the respondents in Universities in South–South, Nigeria. This instrument was made on the basis of the four points rating scale response in which the respondents were given four alternative answers that were grouped into four categories according to the research constructs. Very High Extent (VHE-4), High Extent (HE-3), Low Extent (LE-2) and Very Low Extent (VLE-1). The instrument was face validated and content validated with three research experts from the Department of Business education two experts and one of the experts from Department of Guidance and Counseling of Ignatius Ajuru Universities of Education, Rumuolumeni, Port harcourt for the face and contents validation. Thirty final year students in the College of Education Technical, Asaba, Delta State who were business education students were given the instrument for testing its reliability. A test-retest was done in a College of Education Technical located in Asaba, Delta State and the study domain had similar characteristics (settling-schools located outside the study area). The obtained reliability coefficient data obtained from Pearson Product Moment

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Correlations (PPMC) showed that the reliability coefficient was 0.92. Thus, Nunnaly (1978) found the coefficient of less than 0.70 as low indicator of dependability while the value greater than 0.70 as high and acceptable dependability. The current instrument can be said to be reliable according to the internal consistency seen from the Pearson Product Moment Correlation. The questionnaire was distributed to the respondents in twelve universities in South-South, Nigeria by three research assistants. To avoid delay and possible loss, copies of the questionnaire were sent to the respondents and picked up within two weeks. Although 316 people participated in the study, not all of them were able to complete the questionnaires that were given to them. There were also some questionnaires that were either erroneously filled out, sent back blank, or actually not sent back. Of the total of 316 Questionnaires that were sent to the five Universities in the South-South region of Nigeria which offer courses in Business Education, only 295 were returned for analysis, the remaining 21 were not. Overall, 93.3% of the instrument was utilized and returned. The statistical tools employed to answer the research questions were mean and standard deviation while independent t-test was used to test the hypotheses at the 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Research Question 1: To what extent does integration of skill-specific module approach in business education curriculum enhances students' skill in universities in South-South, Nigeria.

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation of the Responses of Male and Female Business Education Students on the extent which integration of skill-specific module approach in business education curriculum enhances students' skill.

S/N	Statements	Males = 155			Females = 125		
		M	SD	RMK	M	SD	RMK
1	Skill-based curriculum helps in developing practical skills that are directly relevant to the job market	3.52	0.25	HE	3.71	0.70	HE
2	It helps students bridge the gap between theory and practice and prepares them for the demands of the workforce.	3.70	0.25	HE	3.49	0.60	HE
3	By applying theoretical knowledge to practical scenarios, students develop a deeper understanding and enhance competence	3.70	0.40	HE	3.60	0.55	HE
4	By developing specific skills that are in demand, students are better prepared for internships and job roles	4.35	0.30	HE	3.70	0.66	HE
5	Promote better physical health of business education students	3.55	0.40	HE	3.80	0.60	HE

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Grand Mean	**7.59**	**1.16**	**HE**	**7.53**	**1.39**	**HE**

Source: Field Data (2026)

Table 2 gave the grand mean responses of 3.76 and 3.66 for male and female business education students for integration of skill-specific module approach in business education curriculum enhances students' actual skill in universities in South-South of Nigeria for the items rated at a high extent respectively. Further, there was homogeneity amongst the responses and grand mean of "0.32" for males and "0.62" for females, with standard deviations ranging between 0.25 and 0.70, suggesting consensus amongst the business education students' responses between gender—Male and Female. Thus, Table 1 above indicated that the skill-specific module approach in business education curriculum is an effective strategy that promotes the student's skill to a high degree of level in Universities in South-South, Nigeria.

Research Question 2: To what extent does integration of industry immersion program approach in business education curriculum enhances students' skill in universities in South-South, Nigeria.?

Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviation of the Responses of Male and Female Business Education Students on extent which integration of industry immersion program approach in business education curriculum enhances students' skill

S/N	Statements	Males = 155			Females = 125		
		M	**SD**	**RMK**	**M**	**SD**	**RMK**
6.	Industry immersion approach enhances the production of responsible, productive and self-reliant citizens	3.65	0.50	HE	3.67	0.40	HE
7.	It Increases the confidence that employer has in the skills, competencies and capabilities of new employees.	3.67	0.40	HE	3.75	0.55	HE
8.	Industry cooperation assists the school by reducing the burden of investing and acquiring latest office technologies.	4.07	0.60	HE	4.00	0.54	HE
9.	Industry immersion helps students to integrate these theoretical concepts with practical experience	3.60	0.41	HE	3.68	0.64	HE
10.	Enrich business education curriculum	3.60	0.40	HE	3.70	0.58	HE
	Grand Mean	**7.32**	**2.03**	**HE**	**8.53**	**1.55**	**HE**

Source: Field Data (2026)

As observed from the analysis showed in table 3, the overall mean resorted of 3.71 for male

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business education students and 3.76 for female business education students in the universe stated that integration of the approach of business education curriculum - industry immersion program enhances students skill in universities in South-South, Nigeria. The item-by-item analysis of the statement shows that male measurers rated items 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10 to a high degree with mean scores varying from 3.67 to 4.07 and female respondents equally rated them to a high degree.

Further, the rating of the standard deviations of the male rating from 0.40 to 0.64 and female rating from 0.54 to 0.46, and the grand-rate of 0.46 and 0.54 by males and females business education students respectively indicate homogeneity among the respondents and hence consensus of opinion. The following table therefore, shows that universities in South-South, Nigeria have a high level of integration of the industry immersion program approach in the business education curriculum

Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesis 1: There is no significance different in the mean responses of male and female business education students on extent to which integration of skill-specific module approach in business education curriculum enhances students' skill in universities in South-South, Nigeria.

Table 3: T-test of Mean Difference on Responses of Male and Female Business Education Students on extent which integration of skill-specific module approach in business education curriculum enhances students' skill at 0.05 Level of Significance

Gender	No of Respondents	$\bar{X}$	SD	Df	t-cal	Sig.	Decision
Male	165	7.59	1.16				
				.371	.711	H0	Accepted
Female	130	7.53	1.39				

Source: Field Data (2026)

Table 3 shows a slight difference in terms of the perception of the skill specific module approach integrated in the business education curriculum between male and female students with mean of 7.59 (SD = 1.16) for males and 7.53 (SD = 1.39) for females respectively for the skills. Calculating the t-value (t-cal = 0.371), it turns out to be more than the level of significance (0.05) while the degree of freedom (df = 293) and p-value (p = 0.711) are more than the 0.05. Based on this result, the null hypothesis is accepted which helps to conclude that there is no significant difference among the responses obtained from male and female students. Thus, the concept of the skill specific module approach is found to be perceived the same by both genders, as useful in improving the students' skills in the universities in South-South Nigeria.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significance different in the mean responses of male and female business education students on extent to which integration of Industry Immersion Program approach in business education

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curriculum enhances students' skill in universities in South-South, Nigeria.

Table 4: T-test of Mean Difference on Response of Male and Female Business Education Students on extent which integration of Industry Immersion Program approach in business education curriculum enhances students' skill at 0.05 Level of Significance

Gender	No of Respondents	$\bar{X}$	SD	Df	t-cal	Sig.	Decision
Male	165	7.32	2.03				
				293	-5.623	.000	H0 Rejected
Female	130	8.53	1.55				

Source: Field Data (2026)

The results in Table 4 show that female business education students reported a higher mean score of 8.53 (SD = 1.55) compared to their male counterparts with a mean score of 7.32 (SD = 2.03), suggesting that females perceive the integration of the Industry Immersion Program approach in the business education curriculum as more effective in enhancing students' skills. The calculated t-value (t-cal = -5.623) is substantially less than the 0.05 level of significance, with a p-value of 0.001, which is less than 0.05. This result leads to the rejection of the null hypothesis, indicating a statistically significant difference in the responses of male and female students. Therefore, it can be concluded that gender plays a role in how students perceive the effectiveness of the Industry Immersion Program approach, with female students perceiving it as having a greater impact on skill enhancement in universities in South-South, Nigeria.

Discussion of Findings

Integration of Skill-Specific Module Approach in Business Education Curriculum Enhances Students' Skill in Universities in South-South, Nigeria.

The findings indicated that there was no significant difference between male and female student business education students in their perceptions of the effect skill-specific module approach has on students' skills. The mean score for males (7.59, SD = 1.16) and females (7.53, SD = 1.39) has almost the same experience and attitude towards the incorporation of skill-specific module in curriculum. The calculated t-value and the p-value of 0.771 (which is larger than the .05 significance level) both agree that the difference in means observed is not significant. The result favors rejection of the null hypothesis, meaning that there is no statistically significant difference among students with regard to their perceptions of the impact of the curriculum reform on the development of skill. One logical explanation for this outcome is the tendency towards the convergence of business education courses offered by universities in Nigeria such that the

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main content and teaching stratagem are standardized and taught to both males and females. Increased awareness and a movement towards gender parity in education, particularly at higher learning institutions, allow pupils of both sexes to now be encouraged, exposed and given equal access to modules of skills building. Moreover, competence-based education may have dampened the impact of gender stereotypes or gender differences in academic self-concept on skill acquisition in students.

Other studies by Okoro and Osuji (2022), also confirmed that there was no significant difference between females and males on their perception of the employability skills acquired from the entrepreneurial modules in business education. This neutrality was said to be related to inclusive education practices and access to universal technology by their study. Similarly in the South-West Universities of Nigeria, Olawale and Adekunle (2021) in their study established that there was no statistical difference between male and female students in the extent to which they perceive business education practical modules to be effective in their curriculum in Universities. The last two decades' educational changes have been found to be effective in reducing gender gaps in learning outcomes, in a positive direction, in these studies.

However, Edeh and Nwafor (2023) reported that perceptions of skill acquisition differed significantly between the male and female business education students with the former having positive perceptions of the skill enhancing strategies. The researchers concluded this difference was due to the sociocultural factors which remain as an influence on the involvement and self-assurance levels of female students in the technical and vocational side of business education. As the degree of similarity increases in some respects, it is possible that there are other educational pockets which shape male and female students' experiences of and attitudes to skill specific learning strategies, that remain distinct.

Integration of Industry Immersion Program Approach in Business Education Curriculum Enhances Students' Skill in Universities in South-South, Nigeria.

The findings indicate a statistically significant gender-based difference in the perception of the effectiveness of the Industry Immersion Program (IIP) approach in enhancing students' skills in the business education curriculum. Female students reported a considerably higher mean score of 8.53 (SD = 1.55) compared to their male counterparts, who recorded a mean score of 7.32 (SD = 2.03). The calculated t-value of -5.623 and a p-value of 0.001 (less than the 0.05 significance threshold) justify the rejection of the null hypothesis, affirming a significant disparity between male and female students' views. These results suggest that female students place greater value on or derive more benefit from the practical, experiential learning model offered by the IIP approach in their academic development. One possible explanation for this outcome is that female students might be more receptive to structured, real-world experiences embedded within academic programs, such as internships, mentoring, and field-based learning. Such programs often

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provide clarity, structure, and opportunities for mentorship, which research shows are especially beneficial for female learners navigating male-dominated fields like business and entrepreneurship. Additionally, the immersive nature of the IIP might empower female students with increased confidence and competence in applying their knowledge, particularly in contexts where they may face gender-based employment challenges.

Similar findings have been reported in recent literature. For instance, Nwachukwu and Ibrahim (2023) found that female business education students were more likely to positively rate practical, field-based curriculum components as crucial for skill development, citing greater engagement and perceived career benefits. Likewise, Adeyemo and Alade (2022) reported that women in business education programs rated internship and immersion programs more favorably than men, particularly in terms of building confidence, communication skills, and readiness for entrepreneurship. These studies lend strong support to the current findings and emphasize the gendered responses to experiential learning strategies.

However, a conflicting perspective is offered by Chukwu and Eze (2021), who found no significant gender differences in students' perceptions of experiential learning in business education. Their study concluded that both male and female students benefited equally from programs like IIP and recommended that future studies should investigate contextual factors such as socioeconomic background and exposure to career guidance, which may influence perception more than gender alone. This contradictory evidence suggests that while gender may influence perception in some contexts, other variables may mediate or moderate its impact on learning outcomes.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study it was concluded that there was a significance different in the mean responses of male and female business education students on the extent to which integration of Industry Immersion Program approach, Whereas, there was no significance different in the mean responses of male and female business education students on the extent to which integration of skill-specific module approach, in business education curriculum enhances students' skill in universities in South-South, Nigeria

Recommendations

The following were the recommendations based on the findings

1. Universities should design and implement skill-specific modules tailored to meet the dynamic needs of the business environment, ensuring relevance and practicality.
2. Collaborations with industries should be strengthened to provide students with hands-on experience through internships, mentorships, and field visits.
3.

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