

By

Oku Effiong OKON
Department of Business Education
Faculty of Vocational Education, Library and Information Science
University of Uyo, Uyo

And

Ini-uwem Enefiok UDOH
Department of Business Education,
School of Vocational and Technical Education, Akwa
Ibom State College of Education, Afaha Nsit, Uyo.

ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to examine lecturers and students' perception of Business Education Curriculum relevance in an era of economic uncertainties. Two research questions were raised and one hypothesis was formulated to guide the study. The descriptive research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study was all the 63 Business Education Lecturers and 2365 Business Education students in Tertiary Institutions in AkwaIbom State. A sample of 25 lecturers and 400 students were selected for the study using purposive sampling technique. Data for the study were collected using a researcher made instrument entitled "Perception of Business Education Curriculum Relevance in Economic Uncertainty Questionnaire". Mean and Standard Deviation were used in answering the research questions while independent t-test was used to test the hypothesis. The finding of the study indicated that both lecturers and students perceived a moderate relevance of Business Curriculum in the era of economic uncertainty. It was concluded that, there is a need to revise the business education curriculum for it to address the country's economic uncertainties. It was recommended among others that there should be provision in the revised curriculum for sufficient industry experience for student so that they can fit in their specified areas effectively after graduation.

KEYWORDS: Lecturers, Students, Perception, Business Education, Curriculum, Economic Uncertainties

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

In Nigeria, where the economy has historically been dependent on oil exports, there is a growing recognition of the need to diversify and strengthen other sectors. Business Education plays a significant role in this effort by preparing students to understand and manage the complexities of modern business practices (Muttaka, 2015; Uzonwanne, 2015). According to Adeola (2019), Business Education provides students with the ability to analyze market trends, manage resources efficiently, and make informed decisions that are crucial for navigating economic uncertainties effectively.

Economic uncertainties, such as fluctuating oil prices, inflation, and political instability, pose significant challenges to Nigeria's economy. In such a volatile environment, business education is expected to produce graduates who can contribute to economic stability and growth. Hence, equipping students with relevant skills and knowledge, with assurance that business education can help them adapt to changing economic conditions, start and manage successful businesses, and contribute to job creation (Okpo *et al.*, 2023; Udoudomet *et al.*, 2016)..As noted by Okoye and Okwelle (2014), the aim of Business Education is to prepare students for various business-related careers and to foster a proactive approach to addressing economic challenges.

Business education courses typically include financial accounting, marketing principles, business management, and business law (Ore, 2023). However, there are several issues with the current curriculum that may limit its effectiveness in addressing economic uncertainties..

Theoretical Focus: A significant portion of the curriculum is theoretical, with limited emphasis on practical, real-world applications. According to Okoro (2024), this theoretical focus can result in a gap between what

students learn and what is required in the actual business environment. The lack of practical components may leave students ill-prepared to handle the complexities of the modern business world.

- i. **Outdated Content:** Some aspects of the curriculum are outdated and not reflective of current business practices. For instance, while traditional business concepts are covered, newer areas such as digital marketing, data analytics, and e-commerce might not receive sufficient attention. Uwameiye (2015) highlights that an outdated curriculum fails to address contemporary challenges and opportunities in the business environment.
- ii. **Limited Industry Collaboration:** Effective business education often involves collaboration between educational institutions and industry stakeholders. This partnership do provide students with real-world experiences, such as internships and industry projects. However, in Nigeria, there is often limited engagement between educators and industry professionals, which hinders the relevance of the curriculum. According to a study by Adeola (2019), this lack of industry collaboration can result in a disconnect between what is taught in classrooms and the skills needed in the job market.
- iii. **Insufficient Entrepreneurial Focus:** While entrepreneurship is a key component of business education, there is concern that the curriculum may not fully prepare students to start and manage their own businesses. Theoretical knowledge alone may not be sufficient to develop the entrepreneurial skills needed to navigate economic uncertainties. As noted by Okoye and Okwelle (2014), there is a need for a more hands-on approach to teaching entrepreneurship, including practical experiences and mentorship opportunities.

Given the economic uncertainties Nigeria faces, there is growing doubt about whether the current business education curriculum is adequately preparing students to address these challenges. The rapid pace of economic change, technological advancements, and shifting market demands require a curriculum that is both dynamic and responsive (Clement *et al.*, 2024).

One of the primary concerns is whether the curriculum aligns with the current economic realities of Nigeria. For example, the curriculum may not sufficiently address the impact of globalization, the rise of digital technologies, and the need for innovation. As economic uncertainties evolve, the curriculum needs to be updated regularly to reflect these changes and prepare students for the emerging business landscape (Ohadiugha, 2022).

Therefore, business education is essential for preparing students to navigate economic uncertainties, there are significant concerns about the current curriculum in Nigeria. The curriculum needs to be continuously updated to address emerging economic challenges and to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical skills. By enhancing the relevance of business education, Nigeria could better equip her students to contribute to economic stability and growth, even in times of uncertainty. Hence, this study is conducted to determine lecturers' and students' perception of the relevance of Business Education Curriculum in the era of uncertainties in Nigeria.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Business education is intended to equip students with critical skills and knowledge for navigating the complexities of the business world and addressing economic challenges. It aims to prepare individuals for various careers in business, foster entrepreneurship, and contribute to economic stability and growth. In Nigeria, where the economy faces significant uncertainties such as fluctuating oil prices, inflation, and political instability, business education is expected to produce graduates who can effectively manage businesses and drive innovation. However, there are growing concerns that the current business education curriculum may not fully achieve these objectives. Despite covering fundamental subjects such as accounting, management, and marketing, the curriculum often remains theoretical and may not sufficiently address real-world business challenges or align with current economic realities. Issues such as outdated content, a lack of practical application, and limited industry collaboration may hinder the effectiveness of the curriculum in preparing students for the evolving business environment. This seeming disconnect between the curriculum and practical business needs raises doubts about its ability to adequately prepare students for economic uncertainties. Therefore, this study aims to determine the perceptions of lecturers and students regarding the relevance of the business education curriculum, with the goal of identifying areas for improvement to

better address the economic challenges faced by Nigeria.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The main purpose of the study is to determine the perception of lecturers and students on the relevance of Business Education Curriculum in Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to;

1. Determine the perception of lecturers on the relevance of business education curriculum in Nigeria.
2. Determine the perception of students on the relevance of business education curriculum in Nigeria.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The findings of this study on "Lecturers and Students' Perception of Business Education Curriculum Relevance in an Era of Uncertainties in Nigeria" may have far-reaching implications for various stakeholders, including educational policymakers, educators, and students. For educational policymakers, the findings may provide critical insights into the effectiveness of the current business education curriculum.

Educators, who are at the forefront of delivering business education, may find the study's findings particularly relevant. Understanding students' attitudes and experiences with the curriculum could enable lecturers to adapt their teaching methods and content to better meet students' needs. The study may also provide educators with practical insights into the effectiveness of various instructional strategies and highlight areas where additional support or resources may be needed. Ultimately, this will enhance the quality of teaching and improve student engagement and learning outcomes.

For students, the significance of the study is substantial. By examining their perceptions of the curriculum's relevance, the research may shed light on how well their education aligns with their career aspirations and the demands of the job market. Students may benefit from a curriculum that better prepares them for real-world business challenges, leading to increased confidence in their skills and a higher likelihood of career success. The study's findings may also lead to the development of more practical, hands-on learning opportunities that enhance their educational experience.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What is the perception of lecturers on the relevance of business education curriculum in Nigeria?
2. What is the perception of students on the relevance of business education curriculum in Nigeria?

HYPOTHESES

1. There is no significant difference in the perception of lecturers and students on the relevance of business education curriculum in the era of economic uncertainties in Nigeria.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This study was delimited to lecturers and final year Business Education students' perception of the relevance of Business Education curriculum to Nigeria's Economic Uncertainties. It was also delimited to tertiary institutions in AkwaIbom State.

DESIGN OF THE STUDY

The study adopted the descriptive survey research design. Descriptive survey research design describes what is happening or the current condition of the variable under study. Since the researcher was interested in examining the perception of the relevance of Business Education curriculum to the current situation of Nigeria, the research considered descriptive survey research design appropriate for use in the study.

AREA OF THE STUDY

The study was conducted in AkwaIbom State. AkwaIbom State is one of the 36 States in Nigeria. Nigeria is one of the countries in West Africa. Currently, the country is experiencing economic uncertainties due to the inflation rates, high rate of unemployment, and raising cost of living. This makes the choice of this area appropriate for the study.

POPULATION OF THE STUDY

The population of the study was made up of all the 63 lecturers and 2365 final year Business Education students in public universities in AkwaIbom State.

SAMPLE AND SAMPLING TECHNIQUE

A sample of 25 lecturers and 400 students were selected for the study. A proportion of 40 percent of the lecturers were selected for the study. This is in line with Nwana (1981) who stated that when a population is a few hundreds, 40 percent of it can form an acceptable sample size. The sample size for the students was determined using Taro Yamen formula. The selection of the lecturers and students was done using purposive sampling technique. The reason for the use of purposive sampling technique was to ensure that all participants in the study are lecturers and student in the Department of Business Education.

INSTRUMENTATION

A researcher made instrument titled; “Perceived Funding and quality of Vocational Education Questionnaire”. The instrument has a total of 15 items with five items measuring each variable. The instrument was scored using a four-point scale of strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree.

METHOD OF DATA COLLECTION

The researcher visits each of the institutions selected for the study to administer the instrument. On getting to each institution, the researcher presented an introductory letter from the Head of Department to obtain permission to involve the lecturers and students in the study. On securing permission to conduct the study, the researcher administered the instrument to the lecture and wait for those who are chanced to complete and return the instrument at the spot, but collected the contact of those who are busy in order to locate them and retrieve the instrument. The researcher also administered that instrument to the students and waited for them to complete and retrieved it before moving to another institution. At the end of the exercise, out of the 425 instruments administered to both the lecturers and students, the researcher was able to retrieve 421, which amounted to 99 percent retrieval rate.

METHOD OF DATA ANALYSIS

Data collected for the study were analyzed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions and independent t-test to test the hypothesis. The hypothesis was tested at .05 level of significance.

RESULT

Research Question 1

What is the perception of lecturers on the relevance of business education curriculum in the era of economic uncertainties in Nigeria?

Table 1: Mean Perception of the Relevance of Business Education Curriculum in the Era of Economic Uncertainties by Lecturers

S/N	Items	Mean	SD	Remark
1	The current Business Education curriculum adequately prepares students for the challenges of the modern business environment.	2.61	.80	Moderate
2	The curriculum includes up-to-date content that reflects the latest trends in the business world.	2.95	.92	Moderate
3	Real-world applications are effectively integrated into the Business Education curriculum.	2.47	.81	Moderate
4	The curriculum fosters entrepreneurial skills that are essential for economic stability and growth.	2.71	.64	Moderate
5	Business Education courses provide sufficient opportunities for hands-on experiences.	2.38	.86	Moderate
6	The theoretical knowledge provided by the Business Education curriculum is relevant to the current economic conditions in Nigeria.	2.14	.79	Moderate

7	The curriculum makes provision for real world mentoring on business development.	2.00	1.14	Moderate
8	The curriculum makes provision for real world mentoring on business management.	2.33	.96	Moderate
9	There is adequate collaboration between educational	2.90	.88	Moderate
10	The Business Education curriculum prepares students to adapt to economic uncertainties effectively.	2.95	.67	Moderate
	Grand Mean	2.54	0.84	Moderate

The finding in Table 1 shows the mean perception of the relevance of business education curriculum in the era of economic uncertainties in Nigeria. As shown in the table, the grand mean of 2.54 indicates that lecturers perceived that business education curriculum has a moderate relevance in addressing economic uncertainties in Nigeria.

Research Question 2

What is the perception of students on the relevance of business education curriculum in the era of economic uncertainties in Nigeria?

Table 2: Mean Perception of the Relevance of Business Education Curriculum in the Era of Economic Uncertainties by Students

S/N	Items	Mean	SD	Remark
1	The current Business Education curriculum adequately prepares students for the challenges of the modern business environment.	2.80	.90	Moderate
2	The curriculum includes up-to-date content that reflects the latest trends in the business world.	2.86	.92	Moderate
3	Real-world applications are effectively integrated into the Business Education curriculum.	2.48	.78	Moderate
4	The curriculum fosters entrepreneurial skills that are essential for economic stability and growth.	2.89	.72	Moderate
5	Business Education courses provide sufficient opportunities for hands-on experiences.	2.58	.94	Moderate
6	The theoretical knowledge provided by the Business Education curriculum is relevant to the current economic conditions in Nigeria.	2.36	.92	Moderate
7	The curriculum makes provision for real world mentoring on business development.	2.28	1.03	Moderate
8	The curriculum makes provision for real world mentoring on business management.	2.45	.89	Moderate
9	There is adequate collaboration between educational institutions and industry professionals to enhance practical skills.	2.76	.92	Moderate
10	The Business Education curriculum prepares students to adapt to economic uncertainties effectively.	3.03	.80	Moderate
	Grand Mean	2.65	0.88	Moderate

The finding in Table 2 shows the mean perception of the relevance of business education curriculum in the era of economic uncertainties in Nigeria by students. As shown in the table, the grand mean of 2.65 indicates that students perceived that business education curriculum has a moderate relevance in addressing economic uncertainties in Nigeria.

HYPOTHESES

There is no significant difference in the perception of lecturers and students on the relevance of business education curriculum in the era of economic uncertainties in Nigeria.

Table 3: Independent t-test Analysis of the Difference in the Perception of Lecturers and Students on the

Relevance of Business Education Curriculum in the Era if Uncertainties in Nigeria						
Groups	N	Mean	SD	t-cal.	df	p-value
Lecturers	24	25.47	4.20	1.301	419	.194
Students	400	26.54	3.61			

The result in Table 3 shows that the calculated t-value of 1.301 for the difference in the perception of lecturers and students on the relevance of business education curriculum in the era of economic uncertainties in Nigeria is significant. This is because the p-value of .194 is greater than .05 levels of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant difference in the perception of lecturers and students on the relevance of business education curriculum in Nigeria is accepted.

FINDINGS

1. Lecturers perceived that business education curriculum has a moderate relevance in the era of economic uncertainties in Nigeria.
2. Business Education students perceived that business education curriculum has a moderate relevance in the era of economic uncertainties in Nigeria.
3. Lecturers and Students do not differ in their perception of the relevance of business education curriculum in the era on economic uncertainties in Nigeria.

DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

The findings of this study indicate that lecturers perceive business education curriculum to have moderate relevance in addressing the economic uncertainties in Nigeria. This perception highlights a significant concern regarding the curriculum's ability to fully equip students with the necessary skills and knowledge to navigate the complexities of the modern business environment. Several factors may contribute to this moderate perception of relevance. One potential reason for the moderate relevance perceived by lecturers is the curriculum's theoretical orientation. While the curriculum covers fundamental subjects such as accounting, management, and marketing, it may lack sufficient practical applications that connect classroom learning with real-world business scenarios. According to Okoro (2016), a theoretical focus can create a gap between what students learn and what is required in actual business practices. This disconnect may lead to graduates who are well-versed in theory but lack the hands-on experience needed to effectively address economic challenges. Another reason could be the outdated content within the curriculum. The rapid changes in the global economy, driven by technological advancements and shifting market demands, necessitate a dynamic and responsive curriculum. Uwameiye (2015) notes that an outdated curriculum fails to prepare students for contemporary business challenges, limiting their ability to innovate and adapt. Lecturers may perceive the curriculum as moderately relevant because it does not fully reflect current business trends and emerging economic issues, such as digital marketing and e-commerce.

The findings of this study reveal that business education students perceive the business education curriculum to have moderate relevance in addressing the economic uncertainties in Nigeria. This perception indicates a critical issue regarding the curriculum's capacity to fully prepare students for the dynamic and complex business environment. Several factors may contribute to this moderate perception of relevance. One potential reason for the moderate relevance perceived by students is the imbalance between theoretical knowledge and practical application within the curriculum. While the curriculum includes essential subjects such as accounting, management, and marketing, it often lacks practical components that help students apply theoretical concepts to real-world business scenarios. According to Okoro (2016), the emphasis on

theoretical instruction without adequate practical experience can create a significant gap between classroom learning and actual business practices, leaving students feeling unprepared for real-world challenges. Also, limited collaboration between educational institutions and industry stakeholders may also play a role in this perception. Adeola (2019) emphasizes the importance of industry collaboration in providing students with practical experiences and exposure to real-world business environments. Without sufficient industry engagement, students may miss out on valuable hands-on experiences that are essential for bridging the gap between theory and practice. This lack of industry integration can result in a curriculum that is perceived as only moderately relevant by students.

CONCLUSION

Based on the perceived moderate relevance of business education curriculum in addressing economic uncertainties in Nigeria by both lecturers and students, it was concluded that the existing business education curriculum needs to be revised to align with the nations' reality and address its economic needs in this era of uncertainties.

RECOMMENDATIONS

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

1. The current business education curriculum should be revised to address the country's economic uncertainties.
2. There should be sufficient industry experience for student so that they can fit in their specified areas effectively after graduation.

REFERENCES

- Adeola, O. (2019). Enhancing the relevance of business education in Nigeria. *Journal of Business Education*, 12(3), 45-60.
- Clement, U. U., Oluranti, O. G., Philip, S. A., and Opeyemi, P. O. (2024). Business Education: Problems and Prospects in Nigeria. From <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/382889472>
- Gupta, H. (2023). An alternative perspective on the lecturers' role in curriculum development. <https://elearningindustry.com/alternative-perspective-on-the-lecturers-role-in-curriculum-development>
- Muttaka, M. (2015). The intrigues of Nigeria's diversification strategy. [Online]
- Nwanna, O. C. (1981). *Introduction to educational research for student teachers*. Ibadan: Heineman Educational Books, Ltd.
- Ohadiugha, M. N. (2022). Curriculum redesigning, development, and innovation as determinant factors for repositioning education in Nigeria.
- Oke, A. and Fernandes, F. A. (2020). Innovations in teaching and learning: Exploring the perceptions of the education sector on the 4th industrial revolution. *Journal of Open Innovation: Technology, Market, and Complexity*, 6(2): 15-26.
- Okoro, C. (2016). Bridging the gap between theory and practice in business education. *International Journal of Business and Management*, 11(4), 101-110.
- Okoye, K. R. E., and Okwelle, P. C. (2014). Technical and vocational education and training (TVET) in Nigeria and energy development, marketing, and national transformation. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 5(1), 1-6.