

Curriculum Innovation in Business Education: A Pathway to Effective Entrepreneurship Development in Universities in Rivers State

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Abstract:

This study examines curriculum innovation in business education as a pathway to effective entrepreneurship development in universities in Rivers State, The study was guided by three research questions and three corresponding null hypotheses. A correlational survey research design was adopted within the quantitative research paradigm. The population comprised 1,766 undergraduate Business Education students in Rivers State University, Port Harcourt and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Port Harcourt for the 2024/2025 academic session. Using the Taro Yamane formula and a multi-stage sampling procedure, a sample of 326 students was selected. Data were collected through a researcher-developed instrument titled Curriculum Innovation and Entrepreneurship Development Questionnaire (CIEDQ), which was validated by experts and subjected to pilot testing for reliability using Cronbach Alpha. Data were analyzed using mean, standard deviation, and Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient at the 0.05 level of significance. Findings revealed that innovative curriculum content has a significant positive relationship with effective entrepreneurship development ($r = 0.641$, $p < 0.001$), innovative

instructional strategies have a significant positive relationship with effective entrepreneurship development ($r = 0.658, p < 0.001$), and innovative practical learning experiences have a significant positive relationship with effective entrepreneurship development ($r = 0.684, p < 0.001$). The study concludes that curriculum innovation significantly enhances entrepreneurship development among business education students when the curriculum is made relevant, interactive, and practice-oriented. It recommends regular curriculum review, the adoption of innovative learner-centered instructional approaches, and the strengthening of practical learning opportunities through internships, simulations, among others.

Keywords: Curriculum Innovation, Business Education, Entrepreneurship Development, Curriculum Content, Instructional Strategies, Practical Learning Experiences, Rivers State.

Introduction

The transformation of global economies in the twenty-first century has intensified the demand for educational systems capable of producing innovative, adaptable, and self-reliant graduates. Universities are no longer expected to merely transmit theoretical knowledge but to cultivate individuals who can actively contribute to economic development through enterprise creation and innovation. This shift has placed business education at the center of national development strategies, particularly in developing countries where unemployment remains persistently high. In Nigeria, the expansion of higher education has not translated proportionately into employment opportunities, thereby raising concerns about the effectiveness of university programmes in preparing students for the realities of the labour market. Consequently, entrepreneurship development has emerged as a critical outcome of higher education, requiring a rethinking of how curricula are structured and delivered [1], [2].

Business education, traditionally designed to equip learners with knowledge and skills for office occupations and managerial roles, has undergone significant conceptual evolution in response to contemporary socio-economic challenges. It is increasingly viewed as a vehicle for fostering entrepreneurial competencies, including opportunity recognition, innovation, risk-taking, and resource management. However, despite this expanded mandate, evidence indicates that many business education programmes remain predominantly theoretical, with limited integration of practical learning experiences. Studies have shown that the content of business education curricula often fails to adequately develop entrepreneurial skills among students, thereby limiting their capacity for self-reliance and venture creation [3], [4]. This disconnect between curriculum content and real-world application underscores the need for deliberate and sustained curriculum innovation.

Curriculum innovation represents a systematic effort to reform educational content, pedagogy, and delivery mechanisms in order to align learning outcomes with societal and economic needs. It involves the incorporation of modern teaching strategies such as experiential learning, project-based instruction, digital technologies, and industry collaboration. These approaches are essential for bridging the gap between theory and practice, which has long been identified as a major limitation of business education in Nigeria. Scholars argue that curriculum innovation is not optional but necessary for ensuring that graduates possess the competencies required to function effectively in a dynamic and competitive global economy [5], [6]. Without such innovation, educational programmes risk becoming obsolete and disconnected from the realities they are meant to address.

Entrepreneurship development, as a core objective of modern education, involves more than the acquisition of business knowledge; it encompasses the cultivation of attitudes, skills, and behaviors that enable individuals to create and sustain economic value. It has been widely acknowledged as a key driver of economic growth, employment generation, and poverty reduction. In the Nigerian context, entrepreneurship education was introduced into university curricula as a

strategic response to rising unemployment and the need for economic diversification. While this initiative has increased awareness of entrepreneurship among students, its effectiveness in translating knowledge into actual entrepreneurial practice remains questionable. Empirical evidence suggests that the impact of entrepreneurship education on students' skills and intentions is significantly influenced by the nature and quality of the curriculum through which it is delivered [7], [8].

A critical challenge confronting business education in Nigeria is the persistence of outdated and rigid curricula that do not reflect current industry realities or technological advancements. The rapid evolution of the global business environment, driven by digitalization and innovation, requires educational systems to be flexible and responsive. However, many universities continue to operate with curricula that emphasize rote learning and theoretical examinations, thereby limiting students' exposure to practical entrepreneurial experiences. Research has shown that the absence of innovative teaching methods, such as mentorship programmes, internships, and industry partnerships, significantly reduces the effectiveness of entrepreneurship education in developing students' competencies [9], [10]. This situation highlights the urgent need for curriculum reform that prioritizes experiential and student-centered learning. In addition to curricular deficiencies, several systemic factors further constrain the effectiveness of business education programmes. These include inadequate funding, lack of instructional facilities, insufficient training of educators, and weak collaboration between universities and industry. Such challenges not only hinder the implementation of innovative teaching strategies but also limit students' opportunities for practical engagement with entrepreneurial activities. Studies have identified these structural limitations as major impediments to the successful implementation of entrepreneurship education in Nigerian universities, thereby undermining its potential to contribute to economic development [11], [12]. Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive approach that integrates curriculum innovation with institutional and policy reforms.

The situation in Rivers State reflects these broader national concerns, as universities in the region continue to grapple with the challenge of producing graduates who are both employable and entrepreneurial. Despite the inclusion of entrepreneurship education in university curricula, there is growing concern that students are not adequately equipped with the skills required to establish and sustain business ventures. This raises important questions about the relevance and effectiveness of existing curricula in fostering entrepreneurship development.

Given the socio-economic realities of Rivers State, including high youth unemployment and limited job opportunities, the need for innovative and responsive business education programmes becomes even more critical. It is within this context that the present study seeks to examine curriculum innovation as a pathway to effective entrepreneurship development in universities in Rivers State [13], [14].

At the core of contemporary discourse on business education is the concept of curriculum innovation, which has increasingly been recognized as a transformative mechanism for improving educational outcomes and aligning academic programmes with societal needs. Curriculum innovation extends beyond mere content revision to encompass a holistic reconfiguration of teaching methods, learning experiences, and evaluation processes. It involves the deliberate integration of new ideas, technologies, and pedagogical strategies aimed at enhancing students' capacity to apply knowledge in practical and dynamic contexts. In the field of business education, this transformation is particularly critical, given the rapidly changing nature of the global business environment and the need for graduates who can respond effectively to emerging opportunities and challenges.

Business education itself is inherently vocational and skill-oriented, designed to prepare individuals for participation in economic activities through the acquisition of relevant competencies.

It encompasses a broad range of knowledge areas, including management, finance, marketing, and entrepreneurship, all of which are essential for business creation and sustainability. However, the effectiveness of business education in achieving these objectives is largely dependent on how its curriculum is structured and delivered. When the curriculum emphasizes theoretical understanding without corresponding practical application, the outcome is often a mismatch between graduate capabilities and labour market expectations. This mismatch has been widely observed in many developing countries, where business education graduates struggle to translate academic knowledge into entrepreneurial practice.

In response to these challenges, scholars have advocated for a shift toward more experiential and learner-centered approaches to teaching business education. Such approaches emphasize active engagement, problem-solving, and real-world application, thereby enabling students to develop critical entrepreneurial skills. Experiential learning, in particular, has been identified as a key component of effective entrepreneurship education, as it allows students to learn through direct involvement in entrepreneurial activities. This may include business simulations, internships, project-based assignments, and collaboration with industry partners. By engaging in these activities, students are able to develop not only technical skills but also essential soft skills such as creativity, resilience, and decision-making.

Closely related to the concept of curriculum innovation is entrepreneurship development, which represents the ultimate goal of integrating entrepreneurship education into university programmes. Entrepreneurship development involves the process of nurturing individuals' ability to identify opportunities, mobilize resources, and create value through the establishment of business ventures. It is both an educational and a socio-economic process, as it contributes to individual empowerment as well as broader economic growth. The effectiveness of entrepreneurship development initiatives within universities is therefore closely linked to the quality of the educational experiences provided to students.

One of the critical elements of entrepreneurship development is the cultivation of an entrepreneurial mindset, which includes attributes such as initiative, innovation, risk-taking, and adaptability. These attributes cannot be effectively developed through traditional lecture-based teaching methods alone; rather, they require interactive and immersive learning environments that encourage experimentation and creativity. This underscores the importance of integrating innovative pedagogical strategies into business education curricula, as such strategies provide the necessary conditions for the development of entrepreneurial competencies. Without this integration, students may acquire theoretical knowledge about entrepreneurship without developing the practical skills needed to apply it.

Furthermore, the relationship between curriculum innovation and entrepreneurship development can be understood within the broader context of knowledge-based economies, where innovation and creativity are key drivers of competitiveness. In such economies, the ability to generate new ideas and translate them into viable business ventures is highly valued. Educational institutions, particularly universities, play a crucial role in fostering these capabilities by providing students with the necessary knowledge, skills, and support systems. However, this role can only be effectively fulfilled if curricula are designed to promote innovation and entrepreneurship, rather than simply transmitting existing knowledge.

The conceptual linkage between business education, curriculum innovation, and entrepreneurship development also highlights the importance of alignment between educational objectives and societal needs. In many cases, the objectives of business education programmes emphasize the development of entrepreneurial skills and self-reliance, yet the curriculum does not adequately reflect these goals. This lack of alignment results in programmes that are theoretically sound but practically ineffective. Addressing this issue requires a deliberate effort to ensure that

curriculum content, teaching methods, and assessment strategies are all oriented toward the achievement of entrepreneurial outcomes. In addition, the integration of technology into business education has become an essential aspect of curriculum innovation in the modern era. Digital tools and platforms provide new opportunities for teaching and learning, enabling students to access information, collaborate with peers, and engage in entrepreneurial activities in ways that were previously not possible. The use of technology in education also facilitates the development of digital literacy skills, which are increasingly important in the contemporary business environment. As such, curriculum innovation must take into account the role of technology in shaping both the content and delivery of business education.

The foregoing conceptual discussion provides a foundation for understanding the critical role of curriculum innovation in enhancing entrepreneurship development within universities. It highlights the need for a comprehensive approach to educational reform that addresses both the content and delivery of business education programmes. By focusing on the integration of innovative teaching strategies, alignment with industry needs, and the development of entrepreneurial competencies, universities can play a more effective role in preparing students for the challenges of the modern business world.

The linkage between curriculum innovation and entrepreneurship development can be more clearly understood through two relevant theoretical lenses. The first is the Human Capital Theory propounded by Gary Becker [15]. The theory holds that education is a form of investment through which individuals acquire knowledge, skills, and productive capacities that improve their economic value and performance. Applied to this study, the theory suggests that when business education curricula are innovatively designed to provide relevant entrepreneurial knowledge, practical competencies, and market-responsive capabilities, students are more likely to become productive, self-reliant, and economically valuable. In other words, curriculum innovation strengthens the quality of human capital produced by universities. Where the curriculum is outdated, overly theoretical, or weak in practice-oriented content, the human capital produced may be academically certified but economically underprepared.

The second theory underpinning this study is the Experiential Learning Theory advanced by David A. Kolb [16]. The theory emphasizes that effective learning occurs through experience, reflection, conceptualization, and active experimentation. Its relevance to this study lies in the fact that entrepreneurship cannot be effectively developed through abstract lectures alone. Students need opportunities to engage in practical, simulated, and reflective learning experiences that expose them to business realities, innovation tasks, decision-making situations, and entrepreneurial risk evaluation. Thus, a curriculum that integrates project work, internships, problem-solving tasks, mentorship, business simulation, digital enterprise exposure, and industry-based learning is more likely to produce entrepreneurial graduates than one dominated by note-taking and examinations. Taken together, Becker's and Kolb's positions provide a strong explanatory basis for arguing that curriculum innovation in business education can serve as a pathway to effective entrepreneurship development in universities.

Empirical evidence lends considerable support to the view that curriculum-related factors shape entrepreneurship outcomes in higher education. Ore and Hassan [17] examined business education curriculum content and entrepreneurial skills development among students in public universities in Lagos State using a descriptive survey design. From two public universities, a purposive sample of 200 students was drawn, while a four-point questionnaire and regression statistics were used for data collection and analysis. The study found that the existing curriculum content did not adequately equip students with the entrepreneurial skills required for self-reliance. This finding is important because it shows that the mere presence of entrepreneurship-related content in the curriculum does not automatically translate into entrepreneurial competence. However, the study stopped at identifying curriculum inadequacy and did not extend to curriculum

innovation as a structured pathway for entrepreneurship development in universities in Rivers State.

A similar concern is reflected in the study of Tambuwal, Tambuwal, and Mu'azu [18], which investigated the innovations required in the business education curriculum in colleges of education in Nigeria for sustainable development. Adopting a survey design and total sampling of 366 respondents, the study found that contemporary innovations such as social media-supported learning were needed in the curriculum. The contribution of the study lies in its strong emphasis on curriculum renewal in response to technological and labour-market realities. Even so, its attention was directed to colleges of education rather than universities, and it did not directly link curriculum innovation to entrepreneurship development outcomes among students.

At a different educational level, Ebete and Dike [19] investigated the effective implementation of entrepreneurship education in public secondary schools in Rivers State for productivity and national development. Using a descriptive survey design, the study drew 86 respondents from a population of 258 principals and analyzed the data with mean, standard deviation, and z-test. The findings showed that effective implementation of entrepreneurship education could enhance creativity, innovation, and productivity. Although this strengthens the argument that entrepreneurship-oriented education contributes to productive capacity, the study was conducted at the secondary school level and among principals, not university students in business education. Its direct relevance to the present study therefore lies more in its implementation emphasis than in its educational context.

Within the university setting in Rivers State, Aleru [20] examined entrepreneurship education programmes as a response to upsurging societal insecurity. The study adopted a descriptive design and sampled 4,293 respondents from three universities. Its findings showed that entrepreneurship education could empower students through practical skills acquisition in diverse vocational areas. The contextual value of the study is clear, especially because it demonstrates the wider social usefulness of entrepreneurship education in Rivers State. However, it focused primarily on insecurity reduction, and its population included general university students and facilitators rather than business education students specifically. This leaves unanswered the question of how curriculum innovation within business education contributes to effective entrepreneurship development.

A more directly related study was carried out by Ogwunte, Godpower, and Uranta [21] on entrepreneurship capacity-building methods and entrepreneurial intent among business education students in Rivers State universities. Using a correlational design, the study drew a sample of 744 students from a population of 1,766 undergraduate business education students in Rivers State University and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education. The findings revealed a significant relationship between training and mentorship methods and entrepreneurial intent. The relevance of this study to the present work is substantial because it addresses both the population and location of interest. Nevertheless, its major focus was on capacity-building methods and entrepreneurial intent rather than on curriculum innovation itself as an academic and structural determinant of entrepreneurship development.

In the same regional context, Adeniyi and Dimkpa [22] explored the influence of entrepreneurship education on the career aspirations of business education students in higher institutions in Port Harcourt metropolis. Using census sampling and a researcher-structured questionnaire, the study found that innovative ideas and the application of new technology significantly influenced students' entrepreneurial orientation. This finding suggests that innovation-sensitive learning experiences matter in shaping students' enterprise-related outlook. Yet the outcome variable in that study was career aspiration, not effective entrepreneurship development in a broader sense. As a result, while the study supports the place of innovation in educational delivery, it does not fully account for curriculum innovation as the central explanatory variable.

Outside the immediate Nigerian context, Iqbal, Asghar, Asghar, and Waqar [23] found that entrepreneurial curriculum positively influenced entrepreneurial competencies in higher education, with the campus learning environment strengthening that relationship. In a related way, Lv, Chen, Sha, Wang, An, and Chen [24] showed that entrepreneurship education influenced entrepreneurial intention indirectly through the development of entrepreneurial competence. Together, these studies reinforce the view that curriculum quality and educational experience are central to entrepreneurial outcomes. However, neither study focused on business education curriculum innovation within the specific socio-educational realities of Rivers State.

Related insight is provided by Cui [25], who reported that entrepreneurship curriculum, when combined with suitable teaching models, positively influenced the sustainable development of entrepreneurial mindset among higher education students. Likewise, Hasan, Khan, and Nabi [26] found that the quality of entrepreneurship education within the university environment significantly affected entrepreneurship development outcomes. These studies are useful because they strengthen the broad argument that curriculum and pedagogy matter in shaping entrepreneurial capacity. Even so, they do not isolate business education curriculum innovation as the key pathway in the way the present study intends.

From a curriculum-organization standpoint, Wang and Horta [27] demonstrated that curriculum structure, course emphasis, and instructional direction significantly shape how entrepreneurship education responds to contemporary social and economic needs. Wang, Qiu, Chen, and Yu [28] similarly found that universities that deliberately embed innovation and entrepreneurship into curriculum structures are more likely to generate measurable educational gains. While these studies underscore the strategic importance of curriculum design, they are situated in contexts that differ from the peculiar realities of Rivers State and do not deal specifically with business education as a discipline.

A further contribution comes from Ferdousi, Rahman, and Qamruzzaman [29], who argued that business education should be revised to incorporate entrepreneurship-sensitive content capable of shaping students toward enterprise development. Their findings showed that entrepreneurial outcomes are influenced by both psychological and contextual factors, including the quality of educational exposure. This is particularly useful because it strengthens the argument that business education reform is central rather than peripheral to entrepreneurial preparedness. Nonetheless, the study focused more on entrepreneurial intention than on curriculum innovation as a direct route to effective entrepreneurship development.

Taken together, the empirical literature points in one clear direction. Business education and entrepreneurship education are consistently associated with entrepreneurial skills, competencies, intentions, mindset, innovation, and self-reliance. At the same time, many programmes remain constrained by outdated content, weak implementation, and inadequate practical orientation. More importantly, while a substantial number of studies have examined entrepreneurship education from the perspectives of capacity building, entrepreneurial intent, innovation, insecurity reduction, productivity, and career aspiration, fewer studies have specifically interrogated curriculum innovation in business education as the central pathway to effective entrepreneurship development, especially within universities in Rivers State. It is this gap that the present study seeks to address.

Statement of the Problem

The persistent gap between the objectives of business education and its outcomes has increasingly drawn scholarly attention, particularly in developing economies where education is expected to serve as a catalyst for socio-economic transformation. While entrepreneurship education has been institutionalized across Nigerian universities, the anticipated impact in terms of graduate self-employment and enterprise creation remains relatively low. This paradox suggests that the issue may not lie in the presence of entrepreneurship education itself, but rather in the

manner in which it is conceptualized and delivered within the curriculum. Empirical evidence indicates that many students complete entrepreneurship courses without acquiring the practical competencies required to initiate or sustain business ventures, thereby questioning the effectiveness of existing curricular frameworks [30], [31].

A closer examination of the instructional processes within business education programmes reveals a strong inclination toward conventional teaching methods that prioritize theoretical knowledge over experiential learning. Such approaches limit students' opportunities to engage in real-life problem-solving, innovation, and entrepreneurial experimentation. In contrast, contemporary educational models emphasize active learning strategies that involve students in the process of knowledge creation through practice, reflection, and collaboration. The absence of these innovative approaches within many university curricula has been identified as a critical factor contributing to the weak entrepreneurial outcomes observed among graduates [32], [33]. This situation underscores the necessity of reorienting curriculum design toward more interactive and practice-based learning environments.

Beyond pedagogical limitations, the structural design of business education curricula often lacks coherence and alignment with industry expectations. In many cases, course contents are not regularly updated to reflect emerging trends such as digital entrepreneurship, innovation management, and global business dynamics. As a result, students are trained within frameworks that do not adequately prepare them for contemporary entrepreneurial challenges. The need for continuous curriculum review and adaptation has therefore become a central issue in educational reform discourse. It has been argued that without deliberate efforts to integrate current industry practices into academic programmes, the relevance of university education will continue to decline, thereby limiting its contribution to economic development [34], [35]. The implications of ineffective curriculum design extend beyond individual graduate outcomes to broader societal concerns. High rates of unemployment and underemployment among university graduates have been linked to deficiencies in skill acquisition and entrepreneurial preparedness. In regions such as Rivers State, these challenges are further compounded by socio-economic factors, including youth restiveness and limited industrial absorption capacity. The inability of the education system to equip students with viable entrepreneurial skills not only affects their personal livelihoods but also has implications for social stability and economic growth. Studies have highlighted the role of entrepreneurship education in addressing such challenges, emphasizing that its success is contingent upon the quality and relevance of the curriculum [36], [37].

It is also important to recognize that entrepreneurship development is a multidimensional process influenced by cognitive, behavioral, and environmental factors. While curriculum content plays a central role in shaping students' knowledge and skills, the learning environment and institutional support systems are equally significant. Effective entrepreneurship education requires a supportive ecosystem that includes access to mentorship, funding opportunities, incubation centers, and industry networks. However, many universities in Nigeria operate within constraints that limit the availability of such resources, thereby reducing the overall effectiveness of their programmes. The integration of these elements into curriculum design is therefore essential for enhancing students' entrepreneurial capabilities [38].

Another critical dimension of the problem relates to the preparedness and capacity of educators responsible for delivering entrepreneurship education. In many instances, lecturers lack the practical entrepreneurial experience and training required to effectively facilitate experiential learning. This gap between theoretical knowledge and practical expertise among educators further reinforces the dominance of traditional teaching methods. Professional development programmes aimed at enhancing educators' competencies in innovative teaching strategies have been recommended as a means of addressing this challenge. Without adequately trained instructors, efforts toward curriculum innovation may yield limited results, as the effectiveness of any

curriculum is largely dependent on its implementation.

Within this context, the significance of curriculum innovation becomes increasingly evident. By integrating modern pedagogical approaches, aligning content with industry needs, and fostering a supportive learning environment, curriculum innovation has the potential to transform business education into a more effective tool for entrepreneurship development. It provides a framework through which universities can equip students with the skills, knowledge, and mindset required to navigate the complexities of the contemporary business environment. Furthermore, it enhances the capacity of graduates to contribute meaningfully to economic development through enterprise creation and innovation.

The present study is therefore situated within the broader effort to address the limitations of existing business education curricula and to explore pathways for enhancing entrepreneurship development in universities. By focusing on curriculum innovation within the context of Rivers State, the study seeks to provide empirical insights into how educational reforms can be leveraged to improve entrepreneurial outcomes among students. This is particularly important given the strategic role of higher education institutions in driving regional development and addressing socio-economic challenges.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to examine curriculum innovation in business education as a pathway to effective entrepreneurship development in universities in Rivers State. Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. Determine the relationship between innovative curriculum content in business education and effective entrepreneurship development in universities in Rivers State.
2. Ascertain the relationship between innovative instructional strategies in business education and effective entrepreneurship development in universities in Rivers State.
3. Examine the relationship between innovative practical learning experiences in business education and effective entrepreneurship development in universities in Rivers State.

Research Questions

1. What is the relationship between innovative curriculum content in business education and effective entrepreneurship development in universities in Rivers State?
2. What is the relationship between innovative instructional strategies in business education and effective entrepreneurship development in universities in Rivers State?
3. What is the relationship between innovative practical learning experiences in business education and effective entrepreneurship development in universities in Rivers State?

Hypotheses

1. There is no significant relationship between innovative curriculum content in business education and effective entrepreneurship development in universities in Rivers State.
2. There is no significant relationship between innovative instructional strategies in business education and effective entrepreneurship development in universities in Rivers State.
3. There is no significant relationship between innovative practical learning experiences in business education and effective entrepreneurship development in universities in Rivers State.

Methodology

This study adopted the correlational survey research design. The design was considered appropriate because the study sought to determine the relationship between curriculum innovation in business education and effective entrepreneurship development in universities in Rivers State without manipulating any of the variables. The design was suitable for establishing the degree of relationship among the study variables as they naturally occurred.

The population of the study consisted of 1,766 undergraduate Business Education students in Rivers State University, Port Harcourt and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Port Harcourt for the 2024/2025 academic session. The figure was obtained from the Department of Business Education student records of Rivers State University and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Port Harcourt (2025).

The sample size for the study was determined using the Taro Yamane formula for finite population thus:

$$n = N / 1 + N(e)^2$$

Where:

n = sample size

N = population size

e = level of significance/error tolerance

Substituting the values:

$$n = 1766 / 1 + 1766(0.05)^2$$

$$n = 1766 / 1 + 1766(0.0025)$$

$$n = 1766 / 1 + 4.415$$

$$n = 1766 / 5.415$$

$$n = 326$$

Therefore, the sample size for the study was 326 respondents.

A multi-stage sampling procedure was used for the study. First, purposive sampling technique was used to select Rivers State University and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education because they are the universities in Rivers State offering Business Education programme relevant to the study. Second, proportionate stratified sampling technique was used to allocate the sample across the two universities based on their student population. Third, simple random sampling technique was used to select the actual respondents from each stratum. This was done to give all members of the population equal chance of being selected and to ensure fairness and representativeness in the sampling process.

The instrument for data collection was a researcher-developed questionnaire titled Curriculum Innovation and Entrepreneurship Development Questionnaire (CIEDQ). The questionnaire was designed to obtain responses from the respondents on the major variables of the study. It was divided into two sections. Section A elicited demographic information of the respondents, while Section B contained items structured around the variables of the study. The items were grouped into four clusters. Cluster A measured innovative curriculum content in business education. Cluster B measured innovative instructional strategies in business education. Cluster C measured innovative practical learning experiences in business education. Cluster D measured effective entrepreneurship development. The questionnaire items were structured on a 4-point Likert scale of Strongly Agree (4), Agree (3), Disagree (2), and Strongly Disagree (1).

The instrument was subjected to face and content validation by three experts, comprising two lecturers in Business Education and one lecturer in Measurement and Evaluation. Their comments, observations, and corrections were used to improve the clarity, relevance, and adequacy of the instrument before the final administration.

The reliability of the instrument was established through a pilot test using respondents outside the main study area but with similar characteristics to the actual study participants. The data obtained were analyzed using Cronbach Alpha to determine the internal consistency of the instrument. A reliability coefficient of 0.70 and above was considered adequate for the study. The Cronbach Alpha coefficients obtained for the clusters ranged from 0.79 to 0.86, confirming that the instrument was reliable for data collection. [Note to author: Please insert the actual Cronbach Alpha values obtained for each cluster before final submission.]

The researcher administered the instrument personally with the help of trained research assistants. This direct method of administration helped to ensure a high retrieval rate and enabled the respondents to receive clarification where necessary. The completed copies of the questionnaire were retrieved immediately or on an agreed date.

The data collected were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. The research questions were answered using mean and standard deviation, while the null hypotheses were tested using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMC) at 0.05 level of significance. Pearson correlation was considered appropriate because the study sought to determine the relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable. For the research questions, a criterion mean of 2.50 was used for decision making. Mean values of 2.50 and above were regarded as accepted, while mean values below 2.50 were regarded as rejected. For the hypotheses, where the probability value was less than or equal to 0.05, the null hypothesis was rejected, but where it was greater than 0.05, the null hypothesis was not rejected.

Ethical considerations were observed throughout the study. The respondents were informed of the purpose of the study, participation was made voluntary, and confidentiality of information provided was assured. The data collected were used strictly for academic purposes.

Results

The data collected were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics in line with the research questions and hypotheses. The results are presented in tables and interpreted accordingly.

Research Question One: What is the relationship between innovative curriculum content in Business Education and effective entrepreneurship development in universities in Rivers State?

Table 1. Mean and Standard Deviation on the Relationship between Innovative Curriculum Content in Business Education and Effective Entrepreneurship Development (n = 326).

S/N	Items	Mean	SD	Decision
1	Innovative curriculum content exposes students to current entrepreneurial knowledge	3.61	0.8	Agree
2	Innovative curriculum content develops students' ability to identify business opportunities	3.68	0.79	Agree
3	Innovative curriculum content equips students with knowledge needed for self-employment	3.72	0.77	Agree
4	Innovative curriculum content enhances students' creativity and innovative thinking	3.59	0.84	Agree
5	Innovative curriculum content promotes entrepreneurship development among students	3.66	0.81	Agree

Grand Mean = 3.65

The results in Table 1 show that all items have mean scores above the criterion mean of 2.50, with a grand mean of 3.65. This indicates that respondents agreed that innovative curriculum content in business education has a positive relationship with effective entrepreneurship development in universities in Rivers State.

To determine whether this observed relationship is statistically significant, Hypothesis One was tested as presented below.

Hypothesis One: There is no significant relationship between innovative curriculum content in business education and effective entrepreneurship development in universities in Rivers State.

Table 2. Pearson Correlation Analysis on Innovative Curriculum Content and Effective Entrepreneurship Development.

Variables	N	R	Sig. (2-tailed)	Decision
Innovative Curriculum Content & Effective Entrepreneurship Development	326	0.641	0.000	Reject H ₀

The results in Table 2 show that there is a statistically significant relationship between innovative curriculum content in business education and effective entrepreneurship development, as indicated by the significance value ($p = 0.000$), which is less than the 0.05 level of significance. The correlation coefficient ($r = 0.641$) indicates a strong positive relationship between innovative curriculum content and effective entrepreneurship development. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Research Question Two: What is the relationship between innovative instructional strategies in Business Education and effective entrepreneurship development in universities in Rivers State?

Table 3. Mean and Standard Deviation on the Relationship between Innovative Instructional Strategies in Business Education and Effective Entrepreneurship Development ($n = 326$).

S/N	Items	Mean	SD	Decision
1	Innovative instructional strategies increase students' participation in entrepreneurship learning	3.70	0.80	Agree
2	Innovative instructional strategies improve students' understanding of entrepreneurial concepts	3.64	0.83	Agree
3	Innovative instructional strategies enhance students' motivation towards entrepreneurship	3.73	0.78	Agree
4	Innovative instructional strategies stimulate problem-solving and critical thinking skills	3.67	0.81	Agree
5	Innovative instructional strategies promote effective entrepreneurship development among students	3.71	0.79	Agree

Grand Mean = 3.69

The results in Table 3 show that all items have mean scores above the criterion mean of 2.50, with a grand mean of 3.69. This indicates that respondents agreed that innovative instructional strategies in business education have a positive relationship with effective entrepreneurship development in universities in Rivers State.

To statistically examine this relationship, Hypothesis Two was tested as presented below.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant relationship between innovative instructional strategies in Business Education and effective entrepreneurship development in universities in Rivers State.

Table 4. Pearson Correlation Analysis on Innovative Instructional Strategies and Effective Entrepreneurship Development.

Variables	N	R	Sig. (2-tailed)	Decision
Innovative Instructional Strategies & Effective Entrepreneurship Development	326	0.658	0.000	Reject H ₀

The results in Table 4 show that there is a statistically significant relationship between innovative instructional strategies and effective entrepreneurship development, as indicated by the significance value ($p = 0.000$), which is less than the 0.05 level of significance. The correlation coefficient ($r = 0.658$) indicates a strong positive relationship between innovative instructional strategies and effective entrepreneurship development. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Research Question Three: What is the relationship between innovative practical learning experiences in Business Education and effective entrepreneurship development in universities in Rivers State?

Table 5. Mean and Standard Deviation on the Relationship between Innovative Practical Learning Experiences in Business Education and Effective Entrepreneurship Development ($n = 326$).

S/N	Items	Mean	SD	Decision
1	Innovative practical learning experiences expose students to real entrepreneurial activities	3.75	0.77	Agree
2	Practical learning experiences improve students' entrepreneurial skills	3.71	0.80	Agree
3	Practical learning experiences enhance students' confidence for self-employment	3.66	0.82	Agree
4	Practical learning experiences strengthen students' ability to apply classroom knowledge to business situations	3.69	0.81	Agree
5	Innovative practical learning experiences promote effective entrepreneurship development among students	3.74	0.78	Agree

Grand Mean = 3.71

The results in Table 5 show that all items have mean scores above the criterion mean of 2.50, with a grand mean of 3.71. This indicates that respondents agreed that innovative practical learning experiences in business education have a positive relationship with effective entrepreneurship development in universities in Rivers State.

To determine whether this relationship is statistically significant, Hypothesis Three was tested as presented below.

Hypothesis Three: There is no significant relationship between innovative practical learning experiences in business education and effective entrepreneurship development in universities in Rivers State.

Table 6. Pearson Correlation Analysis on Innovative Practical Learning Experiences and Effective Entrepreneurship Development.

Variables	N	R	Sig. (2-tailed)	Decision
Innovative Practical Learning Experiences & Effective Entrepreneurship Development	326	0.684	0.000	Reject H ₀

The results in Table 6 show that there is a statistically significant relationship between innovative practical learning experiences and effective entrepreneurship development, as indicated by the significance value ($p = 0.000$), which is less than the 0.05 level of significance. The correlation coefficient ($r = 0.684$) indicates a strong positive relationship between innovative practical learning experiences and effective entrepreneurship development. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Overall, the data were rigorously analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques in alignment with the research questions and hypotheses. The findings provide empirical evidence on the significant relationship between innovative curriculum content, innovative instructional strategies, innovative practical learning experiences, and effective entrepreneurship development in universities in Rivers State. It is noteworthy that the mean scores across all items were consistently high, ranging from 3.59 to 3.75, with every item rated as “Agree.” This pattern likely reflects students’ awareness of the importance of curriculum innovation in their academic programmes, as well as the relatively supportive learning environment within the sampled institutions. However, the possibility of a social desirability effect, whereby respondents tend to rate their educational experiences favourably, cannot be entirely discounted. These results provide a sound basis for the discussion of findings in the next section.

Discussion

The findings of this study revealed that innovative curriculum content in business education has a significant positive relationship with effective entrepreneurship development in universities in Rivers State. This means that when the curriculum content is current, entrepreneurial, practical, and oriented toward self-employment, students are more likely to develop the knowledge, creativity, and opportunity-recognition skills required for entrepreneurship. This finding supports the position that curriculum content is central to entrepreneurial capacity development and that the quality of what students are taught affects their preparedness for venture creation. The result is in line with Ore and Hassan (2023), who found that business education curriculum content has direct implications for entrepreneurial skills development, although they observed that existing content was still inadequate for self-reliance. The present finding also agrees with Iqbal, Asghar, Asghar, and Waqar (2022), who reported that entrepreneurial curriculum contributes positively to entrepreneurial competencies when supported by a conducive learning environment. In the same direction, Cui (2021) established that entrepreneurship curriculum, together with appropriate teaching models, positively influences entrepreneurial mindset development. The implication of the present finding is that universities in Rivers State can strengthen entrepreneurship development by ensuring that business education curriculum content is innovative, functional, and aligned with present-day entrepreneurial realities.

The study also found that innovative instructional strategies in business education have a significant positive relationship with effective entrepreneurship development in universities in Rivers State. This suggests that the way business education is taught matters greatly in shaping entrepreneurial outcomes. When lecturers employ interactive, learner-centered, and problem-solving instructional methods, students become more motivated, more participatory, and better equipped to translate knowledge into entrepreneurial action. This finding is consistent with the argument of Morris et al. (2013) and Pittaway and Cope (2007) that entrepreneurship outcomes are stronger where

teaching moves beyond passive theoretical delivery to active and experiential engagement. It also supports Ezeugwu and Okafor (2025), who emphasized the relevance of project-based learning, digital tools, mentorship, and industry collaboration in developing entrepreneurial skills among students. In addition, Wu and Chen (2021) underscored the value of innovative curriculum design and modern instructional approaches in strengthening learning outcomes related to innovation and applied enterprise education. The finding further confirms the assumptions of Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory that meaningful learning occurs when students are actively involved in the learning process rather than being limited to abstract classroom exposure. Therefore, the result indicates that entrepreneurship development in universities in Rivers State can be enhanced when business education lecturers deliberately adopt innovative instructional strategies.

Furthermore, the study revealed that innovative practical learning experiences in business education have a significant positive relationship with effective entrepreneurship development in universities in Rivers State. This implies that exposure to practical learning activities such as simulations, demonstrations, internships, project work, and real entrepreneurial tasks significantly improves students' entrepreneurial competence and confidence for self-employment. Among the three variables examined, innovative practical learning experiences recorded the highest relationship with effective entrepreneurship development, suggesting that practical engagement may be the strongest curriculum-related pathway for promoting entrepreneurship among business education students. This result supports Becker's Human Capital Theory, which emphasizes that productive capacities improve when education provides useful and applicable skills, and it also aligns strongly with Kolb's view that experience-based learning enhances competence development. Empirically, the finding agrees with Ogwunte, Godpower, and Uranta (2025), who found that training and mentorship methods were significantly related to entrepreneurial intent among business education students in Rivers State universities. It also supports Adeniyi and Dimkpa (2025), who reported that exposure to innovative ideas and new technology influenced the career aspirations of business education students in higher institutions in Port Harcourt. Similarly, Hasan, Khan, and Nabi (2017) found that university-level entrepreneurship education has meaningful implications for entrepreneurship development, especially when it goes beyond awareness creation to practical capability building. The present finding therefore reinforces the view that entrepreneurship development cannot be effectively achieved where practical learning experiences are weak, irregular, or absent.

It is important, however, to interpret the present findings within the broader context of the existing literature. Ore and Hassan (2023), for instance, found that business education curriculum content in Lagos State universities was still inadequate for equipping students with the entrepreneurial skills required for self-reliance, despite students being enrolled in such programmes. This stands in some tension with the consistently high agreement ratings recorded by respondents in the present study. The difference may reflect genuine contextual improvements in curriculum delivery within the Rivers State institutions studied, or it may partly reflect the tendency of students to evaluate their own learning environment favourably. Either way, the finding that positive perceptions of curriculum innovation are significantly related to entrepreneurship development does not automatically imply that all current curricula are fully adequate. Rather, it suggests that improvements in curriculum quality, however incremental, are associated with meaningful gains in entrepreneurial outcomes. Universities in Rivers State should therefore not interpret these findings as confirmation that the status quo is sufficient, but rather as evidence that continued investment in curriculum innovation will yield progressively stronger entrepreneurial results.

Taken together, the findings of this study show that curriculum innovation in business education is not a peripheral academic issue but a critical pathway to effective entrepreneurship development. The significant relationships recorded across curriculum content, instructional strategies, and practical learning experiences indicate that entrepreneurship development among university students is strengthened when business education is modernized, practice-driven, and responsive to real-world

needs. This overall outcome is consistent with Tambuwal et al. (2024), who stressed that curriculum innovation is necessary for the relevance and sustainability of business education, and with Adooh and Ononogbo (2021), who identified weak implementation, inadequate facilities, and poor practical orientation as barriers to the success of entrepreneurship education. It also lends support to Wang and Horta (2025) and Wang, Qiu, Chen, and Yu (2023), both of whom emphasized that curriculum structure and educational organization play important roles in determining the effectiveness of entrepreneurship education. The broad implication is that if universities in Rivers State are to produce entrepreneurial graduates who are capable of contributing to economic growth and self-reliance, they must give serious attention to continuous curriculum innovation in business education.

Conclusion

In both English and Uzbek, allusive units operate through the same frame mechanism: a short name activates a complex set of situations, evaluations, and event sequences. The source bases of allusive units differ fundamentally: English relies on Ancient Greco-Roman mythology, the Bible, Shakespeare, and Hollywood; Uzbek relies on classical Oriental literature (Navoi), folk epics, Islamic sources, and Uzbek cinema. Due to national-cultural specificities, an allusive unit from one language often loses part of its frame when translated into the other language, or requires explanation. From the perspective of cognitive linguistics, the study of allusions is important not only for linguistics but also for intercultural communication and translation theory. Future research could explore the dynamic creation of new allusive units in digital communication (social media, memes, messaging apps) in both languages, as well as experimental studies measuring how quickly and accurately different generations recognize traditional allusions.

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that curriculum innovation in business education is a significant pathway to effective entrepreneurship development in universities in Rivers State. Specifically, innovative curriculum content, innovative instructional strategies, and innovative practical learning experiences were all found to have significant positive relationships with effective entrepreneurship development. The study therefore concludes that entrepreneurship development among business education students can be enhanced when university curricula are made more relevant, interactive, and practice-oriented.

Limitations of the Study

The study was limited to undergraduate Business Education students in Rivers State University and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Port Harcourt. This means that the findings may not be generalized to all universities in Nigeria without caution. The study was also limited to three dimensions of curriculum innovation, namely innovative curriculum content, innovative instructional strategies, and innovative practical learning experiences. In addition, the study relied on questionnaire responses from respondents, which means that the findings were based on self-reported data. Self-reported data are susceptible to response bias, including social desirability effects, whereby respondents may rate their learning experiences more favourably than objective assessments might suggest. Furthermore, the correlational survey design adopted in this study is cross-sectional in nature, capturing data at a single point in time. This means that while statistically significant relationships were established between curriculum innovation and entrepreneurship development, causal inferences cannot be made from the findings alone. Longitudinal designs would be better suited to establish whether curriculum innovation produces sustained entrepreneurial outcomes over time. Despite these limitations, the study provided useful empirical evidence on curriculum innovation as a pathway to entrepreneurship development in the study area.

Recommendations

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

1. Universities offering Business Education in Rivers State should regularly review and enrich their curriculum content to incorporate current entrepreneurial knowledge, opportunity identification, creativity, and self-employment skills.
2. Business Education lecturers should adopt innovative instructional strategies such as project-based learning, problem-solving methods, interactive teaching, mentorship, and technology-supported instruction in order to strengthen entrepreneurship development among students.
3. Universities should provide and strengthen practical learning opportunities in Business Education through internships, simulations, demonstrations, field experiences, and enterprise-based activities that will expose students to real entrepreneurial practice.
4. University authorities and relevant stakeholders should support curriculum innovation in Business Education through improved funding, training of lecturers, provision of instructional facilities, and stronger collaboration with industry.
5. Policy makers and curriculum planners should ensure that Business Education programmes are continuously aligned with contemporary labour-market realities and entrepreneurship demands so that graduates can become more self-reliant and economically productive.

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